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THE PIONEER HISTORIES

EDITED BY V. T. HARLOW, M.A., AND J. A. WILLIAMSON, D.LIT.

THE EUROPEAN NATIONS  
IN THE WEST INDIES

1493-1688

## THE PIONEER HISTORIES

*Edited by V. T. Harlow, M.A., & J. A. Williamson, D.Lit.*

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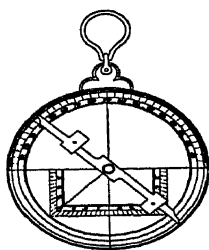
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To  
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## EDITORS' PREFACE TO THE SERIES

THE Pioneer Histories are intended to provide broad surveys of the great migrations of European peoples—for purposes of trade, conquest and settlement—into the non-European continents. They aim at describing a racial expansion which has created the complex world of to-day, so nationalistic in its instincts, so internationalised in its relationships.

International affairs now claim the attention of every intelligent citizen, and problems of world-wide extent affect the security and livelihood of us all. He who would grasp their meaning and form sound judgements must look into the past for the foundations of the present, and, abandoning a local for a universal perspective, must take for his study the history of a world invaded by European ideas. It was less so in the days before the Great War. Then the emphasis was upon Europe itself: upon such questions as that of France's eastern frontier inherited from Richelieu and Louis XIV, the militarism of Germany derived from Frederick the Great, and the Balkan entanglement which originated with the medieval migrations of Slavonic peoples and with the Turkish conquests of the fourteenth century. Now the prospect is wider, for these ancient domestic difficulties in modern form cannot properly be estimated except by correlation with the problems of a Europeanised outer world.

The Orient is in ferment and Asiatic difficulties compel the attention of Geneva because long ago the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch and the English, rounded the Cape and came to India. For the same reason,

## EDITORS' PREFACE TO THE SERIES

Africa is no longer an unknown continent but a vast area in which civilised enterprise demands direction and control. Knowledge of the process by which North America was discovered and gradually filled with Europeans is the necessary basis for an understanding of the modern reactions upon each other of the new continent and the old. In South America the same process is to be seen at work, though incomplete while Nature is yet unsubdued. Similarly, it may be appreciated how the search for an unknown but credited continent lying about the South Pole has helped to shift the centre of gravity to the Pacific, and has created a white Australasia. The present series will show how the permanent factors in these great regions first presented themselves to European minds and how achievements were then effected which have governed all subsequent relationships.

But if the subject has this interest for students of affairs, it has also its appeal to those who dwell most on individual character, courage and ingenuity. Movements are made by men, and in these stories of European expansion are to be met men worth knowing, whose deeds carry inspiration for this generation as for all others.

Each volume takes for its subject the history of an important movement and, while related to others in the series, is thus complete in itself. The authors whose co-operation we have been fortunate to secure have all had experience of research in the original evidence pertaining to their subjects, and in their contributions to this series they give the results of that research in narratives which should appeal to the general reader. Each book is designed to embody the most recent information available, and some will be found to deal with subjects of which no full treatment has hitherto been accessible in English.

V. T. HARLOW  
J. A. WILLIAMSON

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## INTRODUCTION

IN the history of the last four centuries nothing has more differentiated the modern from the medieval world than the part played by maritime adventure and the continuous expansion of the European peoples oversea into every part of the habitable world. The national rivalries that began in Europe have been extended to distant oceans and by the happenings in the struggle in remote dependencies the course of events at the centre has sometimes been sensibly governed. Round the main theatre of action, which still lies in the western peninsula of the Old World, there are now grouped other theatres in newly discovered or newly reached regions with concurrent dramas of their own. The most important of these other theatres have been, two—the lands round the Indian Ocean and those round the Caribbean Sea, of which the latter is to be our theme in the following pages.

For more than two hundred and fifty years those lands, which we may comprehensively call the West Indies, commanded more interest and attention from statesmen than any part of the world beyond the limits of Europe. From the middle of the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century the Caribbean was the cockpit of international maritime rivalry, and for long the lands around it were thought of as the greatest treasure-house in the world. But even after such dreams were exploded and the profits of the West Indies had to be won not by romantic buccaneering but by the

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systematic exploitation of tropical agriculture, the islands played a part of almost undue importance in world strategy.

The history of the region has a peculiar unity of its own, for it is particularly international in its happenings, and even the domestic and separate history of each of the communities runs on closely parallel lines with the others. Yet that general history has hardly ever been treated comprehensively or from the international point of view. The stories of each of the islands and of the provinces on the adjacent mainland have almost always been told in separate compartments according to the European nations that have held them. English historians from Oldmixon through Long and Bryan Edwards down to Schomburgk and Darnell Davis, Williamson and Harlow, have dealt in theory with the history of the British West Indies, but in practice they have written the local history of separate islands like Jamaica and Barbados. French writers have told the story of Saint-Domingue and the French islands in the Lesser Antilles, while the history of Cuba has been the theme of Spanish and American historians. But none of these works have devoted attention to the broad lines of development of national policies in the Caribbean and the repercussion of world events upon them.

It is the purpose of the present work to take up this task and to consider the history of the West Indies as a whole with attention to the history of individual islands only where it played a part in the general drama. To whatever Power the islands have belonged, they have been affected by the same broad movements, whether political, social or economic. Their growth in importance, their decline and their subsequent recovery have followed parallel lines and been affected by the

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same causes. It is our design to trace these causes and their origin in world movements. We shall endeavour to discuss the factors that have affected what is both geographically and historically a strongly marked unity, to show in outline the changes in policy of the nations interested in Caribbean affairs, and to weave into a connected story some of the many strands that have been unassociated. The story is immensely full, and to handle it too summarily would deprive the reader of contact with much of the exciting true history that lies behind the familiar romantic fiction of West Indian treasure fleets, galleons and caravels off the Spanish Main, pirates and buccaneers and all the well-known stock-in-trade of the writer of adventure. But such romance is not our business here. We are concerned with matters of sober politics, of treaties and theories of international law and the like, and the buccaneers find their way in, not as picturesque figures of melodrama, but because they were for a time an instrument of high policy. To treat the whole on an even modest scale in a single volume would be impossible, and we have therefore confined our theme to the earliest of the three periods into which the history falls. In the period since the close of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, the political unity of the history becomes less marked and the balance of interest changes to social and economic things. In the preceding period, the great days of the West Indies in the eighteenth century, say from 1688 to 1815, Caribbean strategy has commanded the attention of great naval historians like Mahan and Corbett, and the history is so filled with important movements that it must demand special study separate from that of the first period. It is that first period to which we here confine our attention, for just as the subject is a unity in space, so it has



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definite limits in time, as we shall show in subsequent pages. It begins with the discovery of the islands at the close of the fifteenth century and closes with the year 1688, when the great wars of the eighteenth century began.

Between the Florida peninsula in the north and the regions about the mouths of the Orinoco the coastline of the American continent sweeps round so as to enclose an immense gulf that is approximately two thousand miles from side to side. The gulf is divided into two by the northward-stretching Peninsula of Yucatan, and the northern part or Gulf of Mexico lies somewhat apart from the rest both geographically and historically. It contains comparatively few islands between Cuba, the greatest of the Antilles, and the mainland coast. The southern or eastern part of the inland sea is the Caribbean proper, though historically we may apply the term to the waters of the whole gulf.

Bounding those waters on the ocean side there sweeps round from Florida to the Spanish Main an immense chain of islands beginning with Cuba and ending with Trinidad, and it is primarily in these islands of the Antilles that the history of the region has centred. The four largest islands or Greater Antilles, Cuba, Española or Haiti and Puerto Rico stretch from west to east with Jamaica somewhat to the south of them. Between these great islands and the deep waters of the Atlantic Ocean lies a maze of low coral islets known as the Bahamas or Lucayos, the Turk's and the Caicos Islands, which play little part in the story. Through the shallow channels that separate them navigation is impossible for all but craft of the lightest draught, but between the Bahamas and the

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mainland of Florida there runs the wide and deep Florida Channel through which the Gulf Stream flows out from the inland sea. This has always been the main gateway out from the Caribbean, and it is commanded from the strongly fortified harbour of Havana lying on the northern coast of Cuba. Between Española and Puerto Rico passes the navigable but less used Mona Channel, which is commanded by Jamaica lying to the south of it.

Beyond Puerto Rico the chain of the Antilles breaks up into a group of petty islands and islets closely adjacent to one another and known as the Virgin Islands, and thence to the group familiar to Englishmen as the Leeward Islands, of which the most important historically are St. Christopher, Nevis, Antigua, St. Thomas and St. Eustatius. Beyond them the chain bends south, and islands of larger size are strung along it until it ends in the largest of all, Trinidad, which lies across the mouths of the Orinoco close to the continental coast of the Spanish Main, or, as we now call it, Venezuela. The southernmost of these Lesser Antilles are known to Englishmen as the Windward Islands, and they range in size from Guadeloupe and Martinique in the north down to Tobago lying close to Trinidad. Some distance to the east or oceanic side of the chain lies the fertile island of Barbados, which has played a great part in the history of the region. Its position to the windward side of the chain has made it safer from hostile attack than most of the other islands.

The main routes across the Caribbean are governed by the position of the Isthmus of Panama at its innermost extremity or southern end. Across or through the Isthmus (since the cutting of the Panama Canal) lies the route to the South Sea and the trade of Peru and

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Chile. The isthmus therefore has always been a centre of strategic attraction. Strung out in a line from west to east along the coast of the Spanish Main where the lofty Cordilleras spurs close in the south of the Caribbean basin, there runs another chain of islands, known to the Spaniards as *Islas de Barlovento* or *Leeward Islands*. With the exception of Curaçao, they have played a lesser part in history than the islands to the north, but have afforded footholds for a clandestine approach to the mainland. Margarita, which in earlier centuries was noted for its pearl fisheries, is one of this chain. There are many other islets and cays scattered on shallow coral banks, but these we need not enumerate, though the names of some of them will be prominent in our pages.

Immediately to the east of the Caribbean is the region known in our period as the *Wild Coast* or *Guiana*, which, though geographically distinct, has been so closely bound up with the history of the West Indian islands that it is usually treated along with it. Historically considered, Guiana is the low, coastal plain between the mouths of the Orinoco and the Amazon, which is approachable for sailing vessels only by the same route as the Antilles. Being without landward communication with the interior, its history has developed on much the same lines as if it were another island group. The development has proceeded almost independently of the interior of the continent.

Since the coming of the steamship, the sole factor to be considered in calculating the effective distance from one point in the Caribbean to another is usually the length of the direct route, but throughout the most important periods of the history of the basin the motive power was that of sail, and the distribution of the prevailing

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winds had a profound influence on the course of events. The winds throughout the greater part of the year blow from the east, since the outer part of the region lies within the belt of the north-east trade winds. Approach to the islands from Europe was by the Canaries, which lie within the northern limit of the trades, and on a south-west course it was easy and direct even with the comparatively rudimentary methods of navigation of the late fifteenth century. The first landfall of ships crossing the Atlantic was usually at Dominica or one of the islands immediately to the north of it. To pass thence towards the inner part of the basin required only a direct course before the wind to be set, and a passage, say, from Barbados to Jamaica took only a few days. But to sail in the reverse direction in the teeth of the steady trade wind was impossible, and a tedious, difficult feat of navigation was necessary. The voyage from Jamaica to Barbados might take a month or six weeks, and this geographical fact is often of direct importance in the explanation of the succession of historical events.

The usual exit from the Caribbean, as we have said, was the Florida Channel, because the winds and currents were usually favourable at most seasons of the year. The rapid Gulf Stream flowing out through the Channel carried the homeward-bound ships into the anti-trades, which, blowing fairly regularly from the south-west, would bring them across to the neighbourhood of the Azores in European waters. But the northern part of the Gulf is subject in spring and summer to violent storms, and even hurricanes, blowing from the north-west that are exceedingly dangerous to navigation. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries movement of, at any rate, large vessels was nearly suspended in the Caribbean during certain months. The islands

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of the outer chain are subject from time to time to violent and destructive tornadoes and these have often played a decisive part in shaping the destinies of the island communities.

The climate of the whole region is hot and usually moist. With the exception of the coral groups like the Bahamas and Turk's Islands, the Antilles and the neighbouring mainland coasts are exceedingly fertile and suited to the raising of tropical produce. Some valuable products, especially the cacao, tobacco, vanilla, arrowroot and cotton plants, are indigenous, and other immigrants flourish abundantly, like the sugar-cane, oranges, lemons and bananas, which, with the doubtful exception of the last, have all been introduced from the Mediterranean lands of the Old World. Ever since their discovery by Europeans the islands have been a steady source of supply of dye-stuffs and cattle products.

The indigenous inhabitants of the Antilles belonged to two branches of the general Amerindian stock of the New World. In the four greater islands the natives met by the first discoverers were a gentle but unrobust race with a very primitive stage of culture, and they were rapidly exterminated by the hardships of the forced labour imposed upon them by their conquerors. Their language was akin to that of the Arawak tribes of the Guiana hinterland, and probably they were of the same ethnic group. The second stock was much more virile, and the tribes withstood all attempts to conquer them for at least two centuries and a half. These were the fierce and intractable Caribs who at the time of the discovery dwelt or raided as far north as the eastern part of Puerto Rico, but later they were driven south and lived especially in the densely afforested islands

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of St. Lucia, Grenada and St. Vincent, where their war-like and cannibal habits made them an ever-present danger to the Europeans who attempted to settle in those islands.

The population of the West Indies of to-day is predominantly of negro stock derived from the slaves who were transported from West Africa for three centuries in an unending stream. Despite the terrific mortality that destroyed a large majority of those imported within a short period after their arrival, their natural fecundity and stamina have enabled the black race to survive and multiply in a tropical climate for which they are physically well suited. Within our period the negroes played no part in the story. They were merely a commodity to be traded in and used like sheep or cattle, and their influence on West Indian history is of the same order as that of a product like sugar. But the commodity of 'black ivory' linked the whole of the lands surrounding the Caribbean intimately with the opposite African coast of the Atlantic, and therefore it is often essential to trace what was happening on both halves of a single stage in order to understand the movements affecting both. Hence though our theme is essentially and exclusively Caribbean, it often carries us into the ill-explored recesses of West Africa's story, as it necessarily must.

The background of European politics in certain of their aspects will also concern us greatly, but in an entirely different way and solely as a background. International rivalries in the Caribbean were affected with overmastering compulsion at every turn and in every decade by what was going on in Europe. But, like every other subject of colonial history, ours is no mere appendix to European history, for upon that history at

## INTRODUCTION

certain junctures it has played a compelling part. That part was never so decisive as the influence of European politics upon Caribbean history, but since in the past it has been overlooked and despised, it will here form one of our dominant themes.







# THE EUROPEAN NATIONS IN THE WEST INDIES, 1493-1688

## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNINGS OF A NEW INTER- NATIONAL RIVALRY, 1493-1500

WHEN on 11 October 1492 Christopher Columbus first sighted the outermost islet of new lands across the Atlantic, he brought into the world of affairs fresh objects for international rivalry that for the next three centuries and a half were never to be far from the centre of the struggle for world power. That struggle had first passed beyond the limits of the old 'habitable world' three-quarters of a century before, and it is to the rival claims of Portugal and Castile to rights in the 'Fortunate Islands' off the coast of Africa that we must trace back the beginnings of the movements with which we are concerned on the other side of the Atlantic.

The existence of islands in the Ocean to the south-west of Europe had never been entirely forgotten in the Middle Ages, but it was not until the fourteenth century that serious attempts were made to open up the way again to those Hesperides of the ancients and to undertake their conquest. In those efforts French knights and their Castilian allies took the lead, and soon after the opening of the fifteenth century Jean de Béthencourt and Gadifer de la Salle overcame the aboriginal Guanches of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura and established their new fiefs on rights originally granted by Pope Clement VI in 1344 to Don Luis de la Cerda, a cadet of the royal house of Castile who was crowned

Prince of Fortunia at Avignon. The part of the French in the struggle for the islands was soon played out, and its continuance was left to vassals of the Crown of Castile. Their attempts to secure a monopoly were bitterly contested by the Portuguese under Prince Henry the Navigator and his nephew Affonso V, the African, who by the middle of the century had firmly established their colonists in the possession of the other island groups in the Atlantic, the Azores and Madeira. In the long wars between Portugal and Castile maritime affairs played some part, with the Canary Islands as the prize, and it was only when those wars were brought to a close by the victory of Ferdinand and Isabella and the exclusion of Portugal from the affairs of the rest of the Peninsula that the possession of the islands was finally decided. By the eighth article of the Treaty of Alcaçovas (1479) Ferdinand and Isabella bound themselves not to disturb the King of Portugal in his sole possession of the lands and trade of Guinea as far as the Indies, or of the Azores, Madeira or Cape Verde Islands, or of any other islands in the region from the Canaries towards Guinea. Conversely, by the following article Affonso V recognised the full rights of Castile to the Canaries. A few months later Pope Sixtus IV confirmed the clause of the treaty excluding all foreigners from Guinea, and Affonso ordered the captains of his ships to capture all foreign vessels found within the limits laid down at Alcaçovas and to cast their crews into the sea.

The Spaniards were thus excluded from any rights to trade within the Portuguese sphere in Africa and the Ocean, and the maritime efforts of the two Iberian powers were diverted in different directions with results of first-rate importance for the future of the world. Portugal was left unhampered to continue her explora-

tions down the African coast, which were to open for her the route by sea to Asia and the Spiceries, while Castile had no further interference with her conquest of the still unoccupied islands of the Canaries and the firm establishment of a colony and advanced naval base in the waters of the Atlantic.

Queen Isabella had begun to take a special interest in the government of her outlying dependency as early as 1476, and, before the expulsion of the Moors from Spain was completed by the conquest of Granada in 1492, the permanent foundations of government were firmly laid in all the Canary Islands save Teneriffe, and valuable experience had been gained in the conduct of war against primitive tribes and the management of colonial dependencies.

The Canary islanders were dispossessed of their lands to reward the *conquistadores* with estates or *repartimientos* on which their original owners remained as serfs to till the soil. Humane and liberal ordinances were promulgated by the home government to protect them from oppression, but their enforcement was difficult so far from the centre of authority, and gradually the numbers of the aborigines dwindled as their labour was exploited by bad masters or as they were absorbed by intermarriage among the poorer class of Spaniards on other estates. From the beginning there was little or no prejudice against such intermarriage, and it was made the easier because all the natives were rapidly converted to Christianity by the efforts of the large numbers of Dominican and Franciscan friars who came to the islands infused with missionary zeal. The propagation of the faith was proclaimed as one of the chief motives of the conquest, and the Church became an extremely important factor in promoting the rapid Hispanicisa-

tion of the islands. The enslavement of the native Canarians was wholly forbidden and the prohibition was enforced, but it did not apply to negroes brought over by the Portuguese from their African posts. Before long there were in the islands numbers of negro slaves who were employed in the cultivation of the sugar plantations, in which many of the new proprietors found a fruitful source of wealth.

But the area of easily cultivable land in the group was comparatively limited, and the excessive population of the early years after the completion of the conquest produced a stream of emigration of those who failed to find success and were ready to move farther afield in search of new homes. Thus the Canaries became a source of supply of adventurous sailors and cultivators for the new lands that came into the possession of Castile.

Her African islands were in a very real sense a half-way house between Spain and the new lands that Columbus revealed to her, for it was from their harbours that her ships set sail for their passage across the Atlantic, and it was there that many of those who helped to establish the island colonies of Spain in the New World had their first experience of pioneer conditions. On a small scale they provided a ground for experiments in colonial government and colonial exploitation that had an abiding influence on the methods adopted in wider fields, and it is thus fitting that they should be mentioned at the outset.

The quarrel with Portugal for the possession of the Canaries was an incident in the struggle that resulted in the consolidation of the Spanish monarchy and gave the rulers of Castile a firm foothold from which to move off on their march towards world power, just as the later contests for colonial dominion were incidental accom-

paniments of the great wars in which Spain strove for a dominant position in Europe. So, too, in the result of that first struggle there is a similarity with the results of later and fiercer fights. It ended with complete victory for neither side, but left each with only a part of its claims satisfied. The Canaries were permanently won for Spain, but she had to sacrifice some of her African ambitions, just as in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries she held all those parts of America that she had firmly settled, but had to acquiesce in the possession by others of the Caribbean islands that she had neglected.

The project of discovery for which Columbus sought patrons for so many weary years has long been a matter of controversy. Some scholars maintain that the evidence he produced from ancient and modern writers of the practicability of a route to Asia by sailing west was not assembled during his early residence in Spain, but was only gathered after his return from his first voyage to substantiate his claims against those who doubted them. Probably the main purpose of his great enterprise in the beginning was to search as others had done for a new group of oceanic islands lying far out beyond the Canaries like those to which the name 'Antilia' was applied in imaginative maps of the fifteenth century. Such in all likelihood were the territories of which Queen Isabella granted him the right to be Admiral and Viceroy if he could discover them, and not the rich and populous lands of farthest Asia, the conquest of which it would have been impossible to attempt with his puny means. But Martin Pinzon, Columbus' invaluable associate, seems rather to have been inspired with the idea of searching for the rich isle of Cipango that Marco Polo had told of, and believed that he could

reach it by sailing directly westward. Columbus seems to have accepted this as an alternative object of his enterprise, and to arm themselves in case they should come to the dominions of the 'Grand Kham' they procured a letter of commendation directed to him from the Catholic Kings.

Thus provided the ships left Palos, and on 6 September 1492 they pushed forth from the Canaries into the untravelled Ocean. After three weeks' sailing on a westerly course a prolonged search was made for a new group of islands, but Columbus' expectations were disappointed, and after some days of further sailing, at Pinzon's suggestion, the course was altered more to the south to seek for Cipango. On 11 October the explorers at last sighted land much where Pinzon had hoped, and the leaders were convinced that they had reached the outlying islands of Asia. They believed that they had crossed the whole breadth of the 'ocean sea', and thought that they could not be far distant from the shores of the farthest of the Indias that according to ancient geographers lay to the east of the Ganges.

Columbus therefore called the primitive inhabitants of the newly discovered islands 'Indians', and in the first few months of enthusiasm after his return Spaniards uncritically accepted the identification. They learned to speak of the new lands as '*las Indias*', and the usage established itself despite its early demonstrated falsity. It seems to have been Columbus himself who first used a qualifying adjective when in 1502 he wrote in his *Book of Privileges* of '*las Yndias occidentales à todo el mundo innotas*'. The Spaniards came to distinguish the islands from the mainland of the Indies by calling them the 'Antilles', with memories of the imaginary 'Antilia'. English usage has confined the name 'West Indies' to

the islands surrounding the Caribbean, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries applied the term 'the Spanish Main' to the adjacent continental land to the south that the Spaniards called *Tierra Ferme*.

The islet Columbus first landed upon is now generally identified with Watling Island, an outlying atoll of the Bahamas or Lucayos, whence he passed on to the shores of what we now call Cuba. He was certain that this was the Asiatic mainland and that it could not be far from the dominions of the 'Grand Kham'. He therefore despatched a party of his men inland to search for the great city of Quinsay that Polo had described. When they returned having found nothing but jungle and naked savages, his belief was not shaken, but he felt that success was only deferred to await larger means. A few days later he came to shores that reminded him of Spain, and he therefore called the land *Española*, the name, with its English equivalent *Hispaniola*, which for two centuries or more was used to designate the great island that we now call Haiti. Leaving on its northern coast a small garrison, he set sail to carry to Court the momentous news that Castile had anticipated Portugal in her long quest for the Indies and that the riches of Asia awaited a fully equipped expedition.

If this claim were justified, it threatened to revive the dangerous rivalry that had been stilled by the Treaty of Alcaçovas thirteen years before, and when John II, on Columbus' arrival in the Tagus in March 1493, first heard his magniloquent account of what he had accomplished, he feared that if Portugal were to continue her Indian designs she would have to fight for them and face the chances of another disastrous war. The King at once protested that the new islands must be part of his own realm of Guinea to which the Portuguese had the



sole right of navigation. But he did not venture on the drastic step of detaining Columbus as a trespasser, for that would have precipitated the danger he wished to avoid.

Ferdinand and Isabella were as fully alive to the danger to peace as was the King of Portugal, and even before the arrival of the Admiral at Court they took steps to secure from the Papal Curia the recognition of their new rights by discovery. Alexander VI (Borgia) was a Spaniard by birth and much dependent upon Spanish support for his policy of family aggrandisement in Italy. He was therefore entirely ready to do what was asked of him, and in April 1493 he put forth the first of his famous bulls, *Inter caetera*. In the controversies of a later period when national rivalries were embittered by religious rancour, these bulls were denounced as setting forth impudent Papal claims to divide the world. This was, of course, mere propaganda, and in truth the bulls were not vitally different from others that had been issued in connection with the maritime disputes of Spain and Portugal a generation before. The first *Inter caetera*<sup>1</sup> recognised the exclusive right and possession of the Spanish sovereigns in all the lands and islands discovered or to be discovered by them in the west 'towards the Indians in the Ocean sea'. In these phrases the Pope was closely following the precedents set by his predecessors in recognising the exclusive rights of the Portuguese in their discoveries 'from Capes Bojador and Nam as far as through all Guinea and past that southern shore all the way to the Indians' which had been confirmed by Pope Sixtus IV as late as 1481 when

<sup>1</sup> Various fictitious dates were assigned by the Curia to the bulls of Alexandria VI, but H. Vanderlinden has conclusively ascertained their true dating. See his article in *Amer. Hist. Rev.* (October 1916), xxii, pp. 13 sqq.

he acknowledged the partition of rights made by the Treaty of Alcaçovas. But Alexander's first bull was clearly insufficient to rebut the counter-claims of Portugal if the Indies had really been reached as Columbus claimed. A fresh application was therefore made for a line of demarcation between the respective spheres of discovery, and in June 1493 a second bull, *Inter caetera II*, was issued marking a line 100 leagues to the west of the Azores and Cape Verde Islands beyond which no foreigner was to sail without the permission of Spain. The rights of Ferdinand and Isabella to all lands found or to be found to the west or the south towards India and all other regions were recognised, provided they had not been occupied by a Christian prince before Christmas 1492. A supplementary bull, *Eximiae*, issued in July emphasised these privileges, and in September 1493 a fourth and final bull removed the proviso in favour of prior occupation by other Christian princes in the regions assigned to Spain.

The provisions of these celebrated instruments clearly favoured one side at the expense of the other, but the time had long gone by when Papal pronouncements were effective in the sphere of secular international affairs, and the really important decision was reached by ordinary diplomatic means. As a threat against the newly discovered islands if his claims were neglected, John II assembled a powerful fleet in the Tagus and despatched an envoy to open direct negotiations. The Catholic Kings were ready to listen, for after the first flood of enthusiasm had passed, doubts arose among shrewd observers as to whether Columbus' claims to have reached the outskirts of Asia were really true. Peter Martyr, the celebrated and well-informed letter-writer, in describing the discoveries to his correspond-

ents in Italy in May 1493, spoke only of them as lying in the antipodes of the west, and in the following October he clearly expressed his disbelief that Columbus had reached the Indies. By that date, we may therefore be certain, such doubts were in the minds of each of the powers and the way lay open for compromise.

Plenipotentiaries equipped with all the geographical science of the time met at Tordesillas, and on 7 June 1494 a treaty was signed naming a line of demarcation through the waters to the south which Spain and Portugal agreed to accept as the boundary between their respective claims. It was agreed that neither would authorise attempts at discovery within the sphere of the other, and the dividing line was settled to run north and south 370 leagues to the west of the Cape Verde Islands, that is to say, approximately half-way between the westernmost lands discovered by the Portuguese and the easternmost of the new islands found by Columbus. The state of affairs in Europe made it the interest of both Iberian powers to keep on friendly terms, and for thirty years from the time of the Tordesillas treaty there was scrupulous respect on both sides for its exclusive provisions. The treaty set matters at rest for many years as far as the Antilles were concerned, and Spain was left free to establish her dominion in the Western World without foreign interference.

Columbus' first voyage was an almost unnoticed private venture with very limited royal patronage; but his second, which began in September 1493, was a venture on a national scale that excited interest throughout the Peninsula. Adventurous spirits flocked to join the expedition, and it was planned and equipped on an elaborate scale. The plan was to found a real colony in Española as an advanced base from which to send out

parties to search for the riches of the mainland that the Admiral believed could not lie far distant. Gratified with the resounding title of 'Admiral of the Ocean Sea' and with all his contracted privileges confirmed, he went forth with a force five times as great as he had commanded before.

The adventurers were very different from the rough sailors who alone had then accompanied him. Besides skilled artisans and labourers sent out at the royal expense to build up the colony, there was the main company, Spanish gentlemen of high birth but no fortune who were going out as knights-errant to carve out fiefs for themselves from the riches of India. Many were Canarians who had failed to find the Fortunate Islands equal to their hopes, but were familiar with the stories the Portuguese adventurers brought back of their winnings of gold dust and ivory from the coasts of Guinea. Much of the subsequent history of the Antilles under the Spaniards is bound up with this mingling of the practical, thrifty agriculturist and the dare-devil soldiers of fortune. It is the latter who have come down in history while the work of the former has been neglected. But we need say little here of the *conquistadores*. Those hardly began their exploits before Cortez sailed for Mexico twenty-five years after the discovery, and their scene was the mainland. The work of establishing the island base whence the first spectacular campaigns were provisioned was done by men of the colonising type who have left little mark in history.

The disappointment of the first-comers to the new lands was acute. Where they had expected to find rich cities to be won and infidel captives to be ransomed, there were only the wastes of tropical forests with poor savages whose paltry ornaments of gold were hardly

worth the taking. Despite all the labour they could force from their victims the gold washings of the streams yielded comparatively little, and those who fondly sought the rich mines that were said to lie in the interior hills of Española found nothing but hardship, starvation and the deadly ravages of unknown tropical disease.

The colonists were rent by faction and discontent; the labourers were unhoused and ill-fed; and the hidalgos were bitterly insulted at being forced to obey the orders of the Admiral, a hated Genoese, and to join in manual labour. His tales had been proved false, and his capacity as a leader of men was clearly unequal to his pretensions or the emergencies with which the colony was faced. Nor did his work of exploration help him to hold his early prestige. Columbus had possibly sighted San Juan de Puerto Rico on his first voyage, while Dominica and certain others of the chain of the Lesser Antilles were discovered and named in the course of his second outward voyage. Three months after the arrival of the expedition in Española he set sail with his most trusted associates to find the mainland of Asia (April 1494). Jamaica was discovered (14 May 1494), but as it was clearly but another island, a northerly course was steered until the westward-trending southern shore of Cuba was sighted. For a month the coast was traced to the west amidst extraordinary difficulties of navigation, but without the least sign of anything resembling the lands of the Indies for which the explorers were searching. There is little doubt that the shrewdest of his pilots, among whom was the celebrated map-maker Juan de la Cosa, were already convinced of the unpalatable truth, but by an outrageous exercise of authority which was never forgiven him, Columbus, before returning, compelled them to swear that the coast was that of the main-

land, the beginning of the Indies and the terminus that whosoever desired to come from Spain overland to these parts would reach. The Admiral might still hold to his illusion, but others could no longer be persuaded, and all his efforts did nothing but add to his discredit.

While he had been absent from Española, his brother Bartholomew had been left in command as *adelantado*. The site that was selected for settlement on the northern coast, and called Ysabela after the Queen, was ill chosen and very unhealthy. The country round yielded little food, and the land was unsuited for cultivation by those who had no experience of tropical agriculture. Hence the colonists were dependent upon the stores they had brought from Spain, and when those were exhausted, and the poor supplies of food they could capture from the natives had to be sought farther and farther afield, the weakened survivors of the original force were faced by starvation until they were relieved from the supplies of the ships sent out to reinforce them. Beyond a small quantity of gold nothing could be sent back to recoup the Crown for the expenses of the expedition but a few hundreds of miserable slaves who had been captured in costly raids, and whom the conscience of the Queen could not allow to remain in captivity.

The population of Española when the Europeans arrived was probably less than the wild guesses of some early observers like Las Casas estimated it. In all probability there were between 200,000 and 300,000 aborigines, whose numbers were reduced by two-thirds in the three years of Columbus' conquest. This terrible mortality was due in part to the ruthless methods of warfare employed by the well-armed Spaniards against the primitive weapons of the savages, but mainly to the rapid exhaustion of food supplies and to the devastating

onslaughts of epidemic diseases brought from Europe. Primitive peoples are always particularly subject to the ravages of infection, and probably the greater part of the deaths may be attributed to this cause. The only gold-workings that shewed signs of being continuously productive were found on the southern and more fertile side of the island, and after his brother's departure for Spain in 1496, Bartholomew Columbus marched thither across the mountains and established a new centre of government in a fertile plain facing south near the river Ozama, whose mouth afforded a safe and sheltered harbour. The new settlement was called Santo Domingo after the Admiral's father, and though in the beginning it was only a stockaded post to afford an easily defensible base against native attacks, it was the first town established by the Spaniards in the New World that had a permanent existence, and it always took precedence among the cities of the Indies.

For two and a half years, while Columbus remained in Spain attempting to guard his rights of monopoly and privilege and to persuade the sovereigns to furnish him with new reinforcements and supplies, matters in Española went from bad to worse. To the horrors of the Indian campaigns was added the bitterness of civil strife. Of the original immigrants who had come from Spain with hopes of the rich plunder of the East but a few hundreds remained, torn by faction and abandoned to idleness and excess. Ferdinand and Isabella were seriously alarmed by the tragic complaints they received by every home-coming ship, but at length they allowed Columbus to sail for a third time, in May 1498, with his dignities unimpaired and his powers as governor still intact. Confidence in the enterprise had sunk so low that the only recruits he could get for the colony were

reprieved criminals, who, when they landed, added nothing but another element of discord to the distracted island. A stream of famished and despairing colonists brought back to Spain terrible tales, and it at last became patent to the sovereigns that, since the Admiral was incapable of clearing up the troubles, they must take matters under the direct control of the Crown. They must appoint a royal governor of trusted capacity who could command the respect of Spaniards as the domineering self-esteem of the upstart Genoese brothers had never done. It was determined to introduce a system of direct royal government such as had been worked out in the Canaries, and Francisco de Bobadilla was appointed to enforce it.

He arrived in Española at the end of August 1500, and at once took matters with a stern hand. Columbus and his brothers were forced to submit after some show of resistance, and they were shipped off to Spain as prisoners. The Admiral was liberated on his arrival and restored to the honours that had been promised him, but he never regained political power, and his connection with the colonisation of Española was at an end. Once more at his earnest solicitations he was permitted to sail to the West, but with little more distinction than the many private adventurers who were seeking for a navigable strait through the great continental barrier that, it was now certain, barred the westward way to Asia. Even if he could find it and come to the riches of the cities of the true Indies, he had been forestalled, for Vasco da Gama had successfully accomplished his quest and Portugal would admit no competitor to share in her monopoly. The fall from the splendour of his second sailing to the obscurity of his fourth was tragic, and when, after two years of almost profitless wandering, he



returned to die at Valladolid in 1506, his passing was almost unnoticed.

The fame of Columbus rests securely upon his work as an explorer and it has been the theme of innumerable writers from Washington Irving onwards. But we are concerned only with what he did as founder of the first European settlements in the West Indies, and that was very little. When Bobadilla arrived in Española in 1500, he found only 300 Spaniards in the whole island. Santo Domingo, the centre of what government there was, consisted but of a few miserable buildings, and the boasted gold-mines for which so many barbarities had been inflicted upon the enslaved remnants of the native population had recouped but a fraction of the expenditure incurred by the Crown and private adventurers in eight years of effort.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PLANTING OF THE FIRST COLONY, 1500-1513

WHEN it was clear that Columbus had failed miserably as a coloniser and that the task must be commenced afresh, the sovereigns were guided in their appointment of a new governor by the wise counsels of Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, Archdeacon of Seville, who had been entrusted with the management in Spain of the affairs of the Indies. Their choice fell upon Nicolas de Ovando, military knight of Alcantara, an experienced and highly respected servant of the Crown of Castile.

Ovando deserves a wider measure of fame than posterity has accorded him, for he was the first really successful founder of a modern colony beyond the limits of Europe, and his work of building up an ordered and productive base for Spanish operations in the New World was by no means haphazard, but was carefully based upon shrewd and well-drawn instructions from Fonseca. He sailed from Seville in February 1502 with thirty-two ships and 2500 men, the most numerous and best equipped of the early Spanish expeditions. Supplies of domestic animals and useful plants were taken from Spain and the Canaries with agriculturists experienced in their cultivation, so that the new colony might be relieved of its constant dependence upon supplies of imported food and placed upon

a self-supporting basis. It is for his far-seeing work to attain this end that Ovando chiefly deserves to be remembered, for he was very successful. Whereas there were only 300 ill-disciplined and faction-rent Spaniards in Española when he arrived in 1502, four years later their numbers had risen to 12,000, and emigration to the colony had become so attractive that Ovando had to appeal to the Crown to check it and not to permit emigrants to pass oversea in greater numbers than the colony could absorb. No Jews, Moors, reconciled heretics or recent converts from Mohammedanism were allowed at first to enter Española, but these restrictions were soon relaxed and before long the *conversos* emigrated to the island in considerable numbers, bringing with them the skill and the capital that were, above all, required to develop its prosperity.

The exploitation of the gold washings of the rivers in the plains and of the mines in the remote interior was properly organised and their productivity was greatly increased; but Ovando's attention was mainly directed to the establishment of agriculture, and to do this he adopted a traditional land system that had been worked out in the provinces conquered from the Moors as the Spanish conquest of the Peninsula had proceeded in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. James I of Aragon (1213-76) had utilised the system of *repartimientos* in his organisation of the conquered Moorish lands in the Balearic Islands and Valencia, and it was introduced by Queen Isabella into the Canaries as the basis of the island government. The conquered lands were allotted in large sections to responsible Spaniards with some capital, and they were permitted to compel the natives living upon them to give their labours in order to ensure their development. To each *repartimiento* a stated num-

ber of Indian families was allotted, and their compulsory service increasingly became the predominant factor in producing wealth from the *repartimiento*, so that the Spaniards sought rather for an allotment of Indians or *encomienda* than for a mere grant of land. The two types of grant are closely intertwined, and the evils inseparable from compulsory labour came to obscure the essentially sound features of the land grants which were necessary to ensure development. Under the harsh conditions of the *encomiendas* and the selfish neglect by the *encomenderos* of the regulations promulgated by the Crown (especially in the Laws of Burgos, 1512) to safeguard the rights of the Indians and prevent their exploitation, their numbers dwindled rapidly and it became necessary to introduce negro slaves purchased from the Portuguese to provide a sufficient supply of labour for the new plantations. Before the death of Ferdinand the Catholic in 1516 the essential difficulties of the labour situation in the colony were fully recognised, but no solution had been found for them.

There were negro slaves in Española as early as 1503, and slave-ships began to cross the Atlantic to replenish them with regular supplies from Africa. The traffic was no innovation, for negroes had been imported into Spain from West Africa on a regular scale for half a century or more. They found a ready market to supply labour to large estates in the south of Spain, and the great landowners in Andalusia and even the Archbishop of Seville himself employed considerable numbers of negroes in the fifteenth century. Other sources of labour as well as Africa were tried by the colonists, and in the four years 1504-8 it is said that more than 40,000 of the inhabitants of the Lucayos, or as we now call them the Bahamas, were transported to Española to work on

the *repartimientos* and in the mines. The number seems incredible and is probably exaggerated, but there is no doubt that the Bahamas were depopulated without securing any permanent increase of the labour supply in Española. The mortality was terrible, and the imported Lucayans practically committed mass suicide.

The horrors incident to this wholesale enslavement of the Indians aroused the denunciations of many of the religious working in the islands. They found a leader in the celebrated 'Apostle of the Indians', Bartolomé de las Casas, who had himself been a planter and held an *encomienda* until, touched by conscience, he resigned it. Thenceforth he devoted his life to the cause of reform, and although he repented later, he preached at first the desirability of importing negroes to supply the lack of labour. In subsequent years, however, he condemned even the enslavement of Africans, but probably he had no influence in promoting the beginnings of the slave-trade across the Atlantic, for it was already an important branch of Portuguese commerce to the Canaries and southern Spain.

The slave-trade is of vital importance in Caribbean history and must necessarily demand our attention, but here we must leave its beginnings and turn to the essentially constructive work of Ovando and his immediate successors in the establishment of agricultural production in the colony. They brought about the introduction of many valuable plants from Europe as well as supplies of the domestic animals, and thus supplemented greatly the comparative deficiency of the West Indian flora in useful plants.

One of the first plants introduced by the Spaniards was the vine, but its cultivation in Española achieved little success, for the climate proved too hot and unsuit-

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able. Nor did the cultivation of the olive prove more successful, but orange-trees, lemons and figs thrived amazingly, and before long they passed from the gardens of the colonists into the woods surrounding them and found natural homes for themselves in many parts of the island. The wheats and other cereals of Europe would not flourish, but at an uncertain date, which cannot, however, have been long after the period of discovery, an admirable substitute was found in the native corn or maize, which under better methods of cultivation gave crops that added largely to the supplies of necessary food-stuffs. Rice was introduced early and proved very suitable for cultivation in the well-watered valleys, and the banana, which was brought from the Canaries by Fr. Tomás de Berlanga in 1516, flourished exceedingly. The culture of cacao, tobacco and paprika, a substitute for pepper, was learned from the Indians, and these new commodities soon found a market in Europe and began to afford valuable additions to the island's exports. Cotton, too, was cultivated, or at any rate collected by the natives, but the arts of spinning and weaving it were not understood and it could only be exported in the sixteenth century in the form of cotton-wool to serve as padding.

The vegetable product that gave the most rapidly profitable results, and was to furnish the West Indies with their essential staple, was the sugar-cane. The first canes were probably planted by Pedro de Atienza, a cultivator of Concepción de la Vega, who obtained them from Andalusia in the early years of Ovando's governorship. Gonzalo de Velosa was, however, the first planter to undertake the cultivation of sugar upon a considerable scale and to introduce at his own expense agriculturists experienced in raising and

utilising the crop. He constructed soon after 1508 a little mill for crushing the cane and used horses for working it, so that to him rightly belongs the credit of being the first inventor of the culture that was to bring so much riches to Española in later years. The historian Oviedo, writing between 1523 and 1536, tells us that 'the cultivation of the sugar-cane is one of the richest that there can be in any province or kingdom of the world, and in this island [of Española] there is much very good cane that has been cultivated for some years past'.<sup>1</sup> The possessor of a well-equipped sugar-mill was the master of a source of great profit. Besides the value of the mill itself and of the refinery and packery that was attached to it, its equipment might cost as much as 10,000 or 12,000 gold ducats before it was in full working order, for it was necessary to employ regularly eighty or a hundred negroes. To supply their food it was necessary to maintain herds of 2000 or 3000 cattle, to incur the cost of building their living-quarters, to purchase carts to bring the cane to the mill and wood for heating the furnaces, and to pay the wages of the sugar-makers, who were usually immigrants from Andalusia and the Canaries. Besides this there were the wages of those who made bread for the labourers and the maintenance of the slaves who looked after the growing canes and watered and tended them. Oviedo stated that when he was in Española as supervisor of the gold smeltings (1514-23) there were twenty great sugar-mills in full work besides four small horse-driven mills, and the best of them were worth at least 50,000 ducats, yielding above 6000 ducats a year to their owners. The ships that came from Spain with emigrants returned laden with excellent sugar that found a ready market in

<sup>1</sup> Oviedo, *Hist. Gen. de las Indias*, lib. iv, cap. viii.

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Seville. The residual products or molasses were discarded and unused.

Surpassing even the rapid growth of the sugar industry was that of the raising of cattle. The earliest expeditions brought out cattle, pigs and sheep, but whereas the last could not establish themselves in so tropical a climate, the cattle and pigs multiplied prodigiously. Thirty years after the first arrival of Columbus there were great herds of cattle grazing on the savannahs of Española managed by Spanish or half-breed *gauchos*, while in the mountains and forests beyond there were many wild cattle sprung from those beasts who had escaped from the herds. The beasts were valued only for their hides and fat, for their meat could not be used, and it was cast aside or burned. There were *encomenderos* in the island who owned 3000 or 4000 head of cattle apiece and even more, and they employed numbers of horsemen to aid in their management and to prepare the hides and tallow for export. The numbers of ships laden with cargoes of hides that left Española for Seville grew every year, and in the first half of the sixteenth century Spain became celebrated for her manufactures of leather and for the new purposes to which it was applied.

The raising of pigs was also an important industry in early years, but as the cultivation of the sugar-cane increased it was gradually abandoned owing to the destructiveness of the semi-wild swine, who could not be easily managed. Many escaped into the woods, and the interior fastnesses of the island afforded shelter to many and very savage wild boars. An essential service was rendered by Española to the spread of Spanish power on the mainland in its early years by its supplies of horses, asses and mules. Horses and mares were first



brought to the colony by Columbus, and they rapidly multiplied both on the *repartimientos* and in a wild state, so that before 1510 the price of a good horse had fallen very low until the demands of successive expeditions grew so insistent as to cause a great shortage of supply. Without the cattle of the islands, their horses and swine, their fowls and goats and supplies of all kinds to furnish victuals, the expeditions that after 1510 were sent forth in ever-increasing numbers to conquer and settle the adjacent continent, the progress of the Spaniards in the New World would inevitably have been much less rapid than it proved, and it may be doubted whether, without a secure and well-furnished base near at hand such as Española and the other islands afforded, it would have been possible to accomplish such vast conquests as Cortez and the other *conquistadores* achieved in so short a space of time.

Before 1508, the date by which Ovando had fully established order and modest prosperity in Española, the only expeditions that had set forth to establish settlements elsewhere had directed their course to the mainland about the Gulf of Darien, and they had met with little success. Some of their returning ships had been blown out of their course by stress of weather and wrecked upon the southern coast of Cuba, and their famished crews, who found their way back to Santo Domingo after terrible hardships, brought only the gloomiest stories of the still unexplored island and the impossibility of its swamps as a place of settlement. But Ovando was determined as soon as opportunity presented itself to test those possibilities thoroughly and first to clear up the disputed question as to whether Cuba was an island or, as Columbus had maintained, a part of the continent. In the summer of 1508 he

despatched Sebastian de Ocampo with orders to undertake the necessary exploration and to land and examine the coasts of Cuba at various points. The expedition successfully carried out its task, completed the circumnavigation of the island, and returned with much more accurate and promising information than had been previously known. But Ovando was unable to carry his projects further, for he laid down his government and returned to Spain early in 1509, being succeeded by Diego Colon, the Admiral, only legitimate son and heir of Columbus. Don Diego took up his government under very different circumstances from those in which his father had been forced to relinquish it to Bobadilla eight years before. With a firmly established and well-provided settlement he was able to give rein to the ambitions of his lieutenants and allow them to send out parties to carve out new fiefs for themselves. The first expedition, which sailed in 1509 to occupy Jamaica, was commanded by Don Juan de Esquivel with Panfilo de Narvaez as his lieutenant. There was comparatively little difficulty in overcoming the sparse native population, and though no gold was found, de Esquivel saw the excellent possibilities of the island for cattle-raising and settled down as its proprietor-governor under the Crown with a few holders of large ranches in the plains most suited to the industry. Comparatively little attention was paid to planting, and Jamaica never attracted a large Spanish population.

The old hostility of the Spaniards to the Columbus family raised itself again soon after Diego's assumption of the governorship of Española. Unlike his father, he was a Castilian born, who had married into one of the highest families and had none of his father's aggressive and imperious temper. His government was calmly ac-

cepted by the colonists, but they would not acquiesce in his selection of his detested uncle, Bartholomew Columbus, to command an expedition for the occupation of Cuba. Protests against the appointment were sent to Spain, and in 1510, acting upon the skilled advice of Bishop Fonseca and the Council of the Indies, King Ferdinand chose as the leader Don Diego Velasquez, who had shewn high capacity as Lieutenant-governor of Española under Ovando. His appointment was natural, and it was fully justified. As had been usual in all such enterprises of conquest ever since the early days of the Castilian crusades against the Moors, Velasquez provided most of the expenses of the expedition by the recruiting of his friends and retainers, who expected to reimburse themselves out of the lands and booty they could capture. His most notable adherent was Narvaez, who had not found enough in Jamaica to satisfy his ambition and wished to carry his arms into a more profitable field. The new conquest began in 1511, and within three years the whole of Cuba was explored and brought under subjection by Narvaez' dashing raids against the ill-equipped natives and Velasquez' statesmanlike qualities in consolidating what was won. The latter deserves a high place beside Ovando, the governor under whom he learned the art of government, for both were real colonisers and the first builders who adapted the institutions of Castile to new circumstances and established the system on which the Spanish empire in the Indies was based for three centuries.

The expeditions to Jamaica and Cuba were rapidly followed by a similar expedition to the fourth of the Greater Antilles, San Juan de Puerto Rico, lying immediately to the east of Española. In 1512 Juan Ponce de Leon was given permission to attempt the conquest

of that island. It proved much more difficult than had been the wars either in Española or Cuba, for the fierce cannibal Caribs, who had not long before begun to establish themselves in Puerto Rico from their bases in the Lesser Antilles and the mainland to the south, were much more formidable foes than the tribes of the greater islands. In 1514 Ponce de Leon abandoned his efforts against them for a time and, having obtained the royal licence for a new expedition, sailed away to the north to undertake the conquest of what was supposed to be the island of 'Bimini', but was in reality a peninsula projecting southward from the North American continent. To that land he gave the name of *Terra Florida*, but his efforts to establish a settlement there met with no success and, after a short stay, he gave up the task and returned to Puerto Rico to continue his attempts to develop his earlier grant.

The story of the conquest of Cuba is told in detail by the contemporary historian Oviedo but need not detain us. We must, however, say something of the governmental system that was established, for it was so well adapted to its purpose that Spanish civilisation was firmly planted once and for all, and to this day the settled south-east of Española and the whole of Cuba remain Latin in culture and recognisably Castilian in ancestry. Throughout nearly three centuries of war they withstood all attempts at conquest by other nations, and it is clear that these first outposts in the New World must have had well and truly laid foundations.

The period down to 1501 while the original grants to Columbus were still in force was entirely exceptional, and until the assumption of the governorship by Ovando the colony had no properly organised and stable govern-

ment. Thenceforward, however, it rapidly took on its permanent form. The governor was the essential and all-powerful centre of authority, acting in virtue of his patent from the Crown and controlled only by direct royal instructions. As *repartidor* of the Indians he was the dispenser of invaluable favours, for grants of land or of mining rights were useless without a labour supply with which to develop them. The first governors carried on their functions aided only by their personal followers and controlled only by the knowledge that their actions were certain to be reported to the King and that at any moment they might be called upon to undergo a *residencia* or enquiry by specially appointed royal commissioners sent out from Spain, a traditional feature of Castilian administration. But in 1511 a proper council for the governor was provided by the setting up of the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo, the senior of these powerful bodies in the Indies. It consisted of three royal judges directly appointed by Ferdinand the Catholic himself to act as a check upon the Admiral, Diego Colon, then Governor of Española, but it was established upon a permanent basis by a decree of Charles V in 1526. Its functions were not like those of the *audiencias* in Spain, solely judicial, but it was entrusted with supremely important political duties, for under the governor it shared as his council in the work of government and in the interim between two governorships wielded all the royal authority. The limits of the power of the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo at first stretched over all the islands of the West Indies and the adjacent continental coasts, though after Cortez' conquest of Mexico its jurisdiction on the mainland was restricted to the Spanish Main, *i.e.* the modern republics of Panama, Venezuela and Colombia. Within those limits its authority under the

governor as its president was supreme in all matters of government, and it was also the court of appeal from all judicial bodies within its area.

There was no vestige of popular control of the central government of the islands, but in local affairs a certain elective element existed during the early period. The municipalities were among the most ancient and stubbornly surviving institutions of Castile, and they were the first to be carried to the Indies. By 1507 there were fourteen different 'cities' in Española which were granted the right to bear municipal coats of arms and to make direct representations of their grievances to the King. Of course, most of these towns can have had no very real corporate existence, but the city of Santo Domingo was strong and well organised, and its *cabildo* or council of magistrates had to be seriously considered by the governor. We must probably attribute some part of the power of resisting and surviving hostile attack that was exhibited by the fully settled Spanish colonies in the Greater Antilles to the innate and traditional strength of their municipalities.

As the conquest of Cuba proceeded, one of Velasquez' first measures for organising stable government was the establishment of towns in suitable natural situations. By 1515 seven town governments had been set up, each to form a centre or rallying-place for the *encomenderos* who had received *repartimientos* in the country round with Indians to work them. The most important was Santiago de Cuba, on an excellent harbour in the south-east of the island whence communication with Española, Jamaica and the new settlements on the mainland of Darien was easy. It was designed to make Cuba an additional base for the supply and exploration of the continent, and for this purpose Santiago de Cuba amply

proved its suitability. At the other end of the island the beginnings of the city of Havana were laid by Narvaez on the northern coast to be a base for exploration of the island of 'Bimini', the modern Florida, but its site was changed more than once before the city was finally built upon its safe and easily defensible harbour. The towns were all conceived on a systematic plan, with the church, the town offices and the prison surrounding a central square or *plaza*. The local government, which was carried on by an *alcalde* with two colleagues, extended not only within the town's immediate neighbourhood but over the whole of one of the seven districts into which the island was divided. The capital and the residence of the governor was in Santiago, but Havana was also a subsidiary centre of government for the west of the island, with a lieutenant-governor in residence.

Velasquez had commenced the conquest as lieutenant of the Admiral, Diego Colon, and might have been expected to act under his orders as Governor of Española. In reality, however, he communicated direct with the Crown and received his orders direct from King Ferdinand, who took a special interest in the colonisation of the island, for its gold workings proved more profitable than those of Española and began almost at once to yield considerable royalties to the Treasury. As Oviedo wrote: 'Much gold was had because the island is rich in mines, and livestock from La Española thrived as did all the plants and herbs taken over from here [*i.e.* Santo Domingo] and from Spain. Diego Velasquez looked well to these things, and because he was clever he desired not only thanks for what he did, but also part of what the soil's fertility brought forth. In fine, the island of Cuba came to be very prosperous and well populated with

Christians and full of Indians, and Diego Velasquez was very rich.'

To ascertain with certainty the total amount of the precious metals yielded by the workings of Cuba and Española before the opening up of the treasures of Mexico is almost impossible. Peter Martyr wrote in 1516 that the average annual production of gold and silver in Española was 400,000 ducats, and this probably included the produce of the other islands, so that the royal fifth amounted usually to between 80,000 and 100,000 ducats per annum (say, roughly, £10,000); but this was at the height of productivity and the amount rapidly dwindled. In 1525 Contarini, the Venetian ambassador in Spain, a very capable observer, reckoned that the annual revenue of the Crown from the Indies was not more than 100,000 ducats. This included the first profits of the conquest of Mexico, so that it is clear that the produce of the island mines had fallen very considerably. The total receipts derived by the Crown from the Indies, as shewn by the accounts of the Casa de Contratación in Seville, was in round figures of millions of maravedis as follows: 1503—3 millions; 1504—19 millions; 1505—23 millions; 1506—15½ millions; 1507—21 millions; 1508—18½ millions; 1509—26 millions; 1510—24 millions; 1511—22 millions; 1512—34 millions (a rise indicating the first spoils of Cuba); 1513—34 millions; 1514—23 millions; 1515—27 millions; 1516—13 millions; 1517—34 millions; 1518—46 millions; 1519—24 millions; 1520—13 millions; 1521—2 millions; 1522—8 millions (an enormous drop due to the losses of the war with France). From a contemporary English Act of Parliament (32 Hen. VIII, cap. 14, 1541) we know that seventy maravedis were equivalent to 11½ pence,



*i.e.* 1432 maravedis to £1, so that 1,000,000 maravedis represented at this period about £17,000. It is thus possible to obtain an approximate idea of the total Crown revenue from the Indies, but the important point is rather a comparison of the income in different years. In 1535, when the first booty from Peru came in, it rose to 119 million maravedis, and in 1537 and 1538 to 321 and 371 millions; but it was not until after the opening-up of the silver mines of Mexico and Peru that the greatest influx of wealth began, amounting in 1551, the highest year, to 847 million maravedis. In such vast totals as these the contributions of the islands were negligible, and it is to the causes that relegated the first settlements to comparative obscurity that we must now turn.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE EXODUS FROM THE ISLANDS TO THE CONTINENT, 1513-1548

THE first foreshadowing of the near future came in 1513, when Diego Velasquez had revealed some of the possibilities of Cuba as a source of gold and possessing wider areas of fertile land suited for ranching than anything in the more mountainous island of Española. A stampede of the more active and less successful settlers from the older colony began, and within a couple of years there was a considerable drop in its population, which was no longer much recruited from Spain, for on their arrival in the Indies outcoming emigrants were at once attracted to Cuba. Soldiers and artificers rushed to take service in the companies that were raised and equipped by the more adventurous among the hidalgos and gentlemen colonists to serve under Velasquez and Narvaez. To raise the money to arm and equip their followers they were ready to mortgage or sell their estates for what they would fetch, and this afforded first-rate bargains for any shrewd Spaniard of the merchant class who had some capital at his disposal, which probably had been made in the prosaic hide trade or in dealings in tallow. Thus large estates fell into the hands of men of a greater business capacity but a lower social grade than were most of those who had first held *encomiendas* in Española. It was to such men that the development of the sugar industry was

due, and, unlike most of the *conquistadores* who had emigrated to the Indies to carve out their fortunes with the sword, they rapidly piled up wealth for themselves.

Six or seven years after the first exodus from Española to Cuba it was eclipsed by a far greater stampede in search of new opportunities. The dramatic story of Cortez and his amazing adventures is one of the most famous in the annals of the world, but it does not belong to the history of the Antilles. It affected them only by reflex action and in its earlier stages. Within five years after the first establishment of their dominion in Cuba the Spaniards were beginning to find the supply of Indian labourers running short, and they resorted to slave-hunts such as had marked the horrible depopulation of the Bahamas for the supply of Española. On one of these expeditions to certain little-known islets lying to the south a few Spaniards were left stranded among the hostile Indians, and Velasquez sent two ships to rescue them. They failed to find the castaways, but brought back word of a rich mainland coast, that of Yucatan, lying beyond the islands, and they had gathered 20,000 pesos of gold as booty. Velasquez therefore sought permission from the Crown to explore this coast, and, as *adelantado* or royal lieutenant, to conquer and rule it. He sent forth Francisco de Cordoba in February 1517 with two ships to begin the task. Cordoba returned with the first certain news of Yucatan, but, more important, with rumours of richer lands lying beyond. In 1518 a fresh expedition was equipped by Velasquez and sent out under the command of his nephew Juan de Grijalva to search for these lands and take possession of them as the governor's lieutenant. Grijalva was the first Spaniard to land in what is now Mexico, but, though he brought back some

valuable cargo, he did not prove well fitted as a commander, and Velasquez determined to find a new leader for the next expedition.

Hernando Cortez had come out to the Indies as a youth of nineteen in 1504 to serve under Governor Ovando, and he became well known in Española for his personal charm and natural capacity. When Diego Velasquez was assembling his followers for his expedition to Cuba, he took Cortez with him as secretary, and the young man had some share in planning the policy of the conquest and the establishment of the new colony. Velasquez did not hold an independent command in Cuba, but was nominally only the lieutenant of the Governor of Española, the Admiral Diego Colon. His high-handed actions and his care for the aggrandisement of himself and his relatives excited jealousy among some of those who had not done as well as they had hoped out of the conquest, and according to Las Casas, who was then in Cuba, a serious plot was set on foot to lodge complaints of misgovernment against Velasquez before the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo and secure his recall. In this plot Cortez was deeply implicated, but it failed. Though imprisoned for a time, some sort of reconciliation was afterwards patched up between the two men, and Cortez was appointed to the responsible position of *alcalde* of Santiago and chosen to lead the expedition that was to follow up the preliminary work done by Grijalva. Velasquez sent again to Court to apply for a royal licence to explore and conquer the new lands to the south at his own expense, and to be *adelantado* of whatever he discovered. The desired appointment arrived at Santiago early in November 1518 when the expedition was almost ready, but the governor had changed his mind. He had come to

distrust the loyalty of the leader, and he had decided to revoke his appointment and to select a more reliable subordinate. Cortez, however, was forewarned of this intention, and on 18 November 1518 he slipped out from Santiago with the ships before he could be stayed. Sailing westward along the southern coast of Cuba, he enlisted by persuasion or compulsion recruits from every settlement and requisitioned or purchased supplies of arms and provisions from the neighbouring ranches, entirely disregarding all Velasquez's orders to return. When he finally put out to sea in February 1519 to begin his audacious enterprise, he had under his orders a fleet of eleven ships with about 600 of the best fighting men in the Indies, including well-known adventurers like Pedro de Alvarado and Cristobal de Olid, who had already visited Yucatan. Much of the artillery of Cuba was carried off by Cortez, and he had under his command nearly 3000 men in all when his Cubeño auxiliaries were included. On 18 February 1519 the expedition made its first landing on the island of Cozumel off the coast of Yucatan, and two months later, after firmly establishing a secondary base among the Maya tribes of the peninsula, they passed on to the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico, and on Good Friday (22 April 1519) landed where the modern port of Vera Cruz stands.

When reports began to pour in to Velasquez that the prize of which he had been baulked was greater in promise than he had ever dreamed, his anger was the greater because he knew that Cortez' success was being won on a basis that he himself had laid. All his efforts to recover control were in vain, and Cortez was particularly careful to preserve very strict legality in all his proceedings so as to afford the governor no pre-

text to report to the Court that he was a rebel against the royal power. Immediately after his landing he founded the municipality of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz and nominated its council or *ayuntamiento* of officials, to whom he resigned the commission he had received from Velasquez. Then at their hands he was named as governor of the new colony, independent of Cuba and therefore of Española, and sent off messengers direct to Spain to secure confirmation from the sovereign, Charles V, for all that he had done.

Velasquez was meanwhile making superhuman efforts to equip fresh forces to compel Cortez to acknowledge his authority, and he denuded Cuba of men and arms to set them forth. But every agent he sent to make the attempt was persuaded to go over to his more popular rival, and the only result was to further the progress of an exodus of fortune-seekers whose outward tide from the islands mounted higher and higher with every month that passed.

The governor appealed for help to Diego Colon in Española, but the Admiral had neither the men nor the will to aid in recovering authority for one who had disregarded the provisions of his own appointment as lieutenant-governor and had made Cuba practically independent of Española. Nor did Velasquez get more comforting replies to the representations he sent to the Emperor in Spain, for Cortez was before him, and supplies of Mexican gold were more potent arguments than appeals to legal documents that had been superseded by the course of events. As the news of more and more surprising victories came from Mexico, the island colonies were being devastated by a series of calamities that threatened them with ruin. In the summer of 1519 a terrible epidemic of measles and smallpox broke out

among the Indians of Cuba and raged with extraordinary violence through the villages of the island. In some districts more than half the natives died; in few was the mortality less than a third. The diseases spread to Española and did similar havoc among the remaining Indians though the Spanish colonists largely escaped. About the same time severe hurricanes devastated the south of Cuba, and the plantations of Española and Puerto Rico were ruined by a plague of ants so great that no human means could be found to destroy them. In Española they gnawed the roots of the trees, which turned black and withered beyond the hope of recovery. They fell upon the great orange-trees that made flourishing orchards in all the plain round the city of Santo Domingo and so entirely destroyed them as to produce great scarcity until fresh orchards were planted. It seemed as though supremacy were rapidly passing from the islands to the mainland, as indeed it was, and the colonists swarmed to join in the new adventures.

These circumstances moved the Admiral to assert his legal authority in Cuba, and he prepared to remove Velasquez from his office and prevent the carrying out of his project of carrying civil war to the mainland in an attempt to defeat Cortez by force of arms. Velasquez relinquished his plan of commanding the expedition himself and handed it over to Panfilo de Narvaez, who was, however, defeated and captured by Cortez soon after landing (1520). In the following year the Admiral carried out his intention and dismissed Velasquez from the lieutenant-governorship. The carrying on of his administration was enquired into by the usual *residencia*, and it was clearly manifested that the authority of the Governor of Española and that of the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo were to be fully exercised over the govern-

ment of Cuba. However, after many further difficulties due to the tangled rivalries between the various claimants to power, a final solution was decided upon by the Emperor in October 1522. A comprehensive royal commission was despatched to Cortez naming him governor and captain-general of the province of New Spain, which was entirely separated from Cuba and Española. A little later Velasquez was restored to the governorship of Cuba, but the island was definitely included within the limits of authority of the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo. With this settlement of the constitutional position we may say that the first period in the history of the West Indies definitely closes. The centre of interest and importance has shifted to the mainland, and henceforward the Spanish Antilles are in a back-water of history until the beginning of the sea-wars of the next two generations.

One subsidiary consequence of the Cortez-Velasquez quarrel is interesting. It was particularly important for the great *conquistador* to find means of sending despatches to Spain without fear of interception by his rival. He could not send them by the usual route from Santo Domingo, and so gave orders to Antonio de Alaminos, the pilot of the ship he despatched in July 1519, to avoid coming too near to Cuba and to sail northwards through the Bahama Channel. Alaminos knew the Lucayos well, for he had been there with slavers and he had observed the strong northerly drift of the currents. He accordingly steered a northerly course from Vera Cruz until he sighted the west end of Cuba, entered the channel and continued northwards aided by the current that we now call the Gulf Stream until he came out into the open sea. This was the first voyage made on what came to be the ordinary route, and it proved very suc-



cessful, for only a little over two months was required to complete the whole passage from Mexico to Seville. It also ultimately had important results in Cuba, for Havana in the far west of the island lay near to the track of the returning ships and could be used as a port of call, while Santiago de Cuba was far off the route. Hence in time it came about that the old capital was superseded and Havana became the centre of government.

The decline in the relative importance of the islands that began with the exodus to Mexico in the period 1518-22 converted them from the principal Spanish colonies in the New World to mere points of call on the way outwards and homewards for the rich new provinces that lay beyond. Their history affords few outstanding points of interest for many years, for it became merely filled with unimportant local affairs and the struggles of petty factions for office and power. Local patriotism made the descendants of the first colonists jealous of the promotion of new-comers to office and the opportunities of acquiring wealth that governmental positions afforded. Hence there arose the beginnings of the long-lived quarrel between the *creoles* who were born and bred in the islands and the Spaniards who came out in later years from old Spain. The decay in population brought about a relaxation under Charles V of the regulations against the admission of foreigners. Portuguese agriculturists began to appear in the islands about 1528, and their skill and habits of industry soon brought them wealth upon the plantations and in the sugar-mills. In 1531 orders were issued that married Portuguese might be freely admitted for six years, and in 1536 these orders were renewed and extended so that any Portuguese passing to the Antilles with his wife and family

was permitted to settle and given a grant of lands as a homestead. Portuguese of the upper classes found no inducements to emigrate to the islands, for they could find ample opportunities in the East Indies; but to the thrifty and industrious farmers and labourers, especially from the overcrowded Azores and Madeira, the promise of free land proved very attractive, and before long there were considerable numbers of them in Española and Puerto Rico and a lesser number in Cuba. German artisans who were brought out to ply their trades in the royal forces that were engaged in the conquest and defence of New Spain frequently remained behind in the island ports, and Italian soldiers who were employed in considerable numbers during the conquests often settled down to agriculture in Española after their period of service was over.

Thus the character of the white population gradually changed, and though the institutions, culture and language were wholly Spanish, the *creoles* were much more mixed in blood than the original Spanish immigrants. To this result intermarriage and illicit union with the remnant of the original Indian population contributed. The great preponderance of men among the first Spanish immigrants gave the government many difficulties, for it led to much intermixing with the natives. There was little or no prejudice against mixed marriages, but mostly the unions had the character of loose concubinage and there were great numbers of illegitimate children. After 1530 the legitimisation of such children was permitted on easy terms, and we can say that probably the final cause of the disappearance of the original native population was by the absorption of its remnants among the *creoles*.

This affected only the Indians who remained upon

the *repartimientos* and were gradually civilised. The others fled into the inaccessible fastnesses in the interior of the islands and became known as *cimarrones*, i.e. dwellers amid the summits. There they preserved a savage existence, varied only by raids upon the ranches and plantations in the plains. They were often joined by escaped negro slaves newly arrived from Africa with all their savage customs and superstitions, and gradually negro blood came to predominate among the Maroons. Their lairs remained as centres of savagery in the heart of the islands, and especially in Puerto Rico, where, aided by the cannibal Caribs from the adjacent Lesser Antilles, they were unconquerable and greatly dreaded by the colonists.

In the decline of the islands Española suffered less than either Cuba, Jamaica or Puerto Rico, for it had been settled longer and the population was more stable, while the city of Santo Domingo remained as the base for all expeditions to the shores of Darien and Tierra Ferme and the centre of government over the whole region. Gradually it grew from a mere cluster of temporary huts into a real town with stone-built houses and stores, a cathedral and official buildings for the law courts and the residence of the governor. The need for defence against native attacks had passed away long before 1530, and since there was as yet no danger of raids from the sea, the city was practically undefended. Santiago was the only town worthy of the name in Cuba, for the others that had been founded by Velasquez did not develop and became merely names for the groups of *repartimientos* round them. The complete dependence of the islands on events and plans that lay beyond them is illustrated in the career of Hernando de Soto, one of the conquerors of Peru.

Ever since Ponce de Leon's unsuccessful expedition to Florida in 1513 that country had exerted a lure upon adventurers from the islands that was the more enticing because the marvels that were told of it were more high-flown and imaginary than those concerning any other part of the New World. Not only might it hold the treasures of another Mexico, but its forests were said to shade the 'Fountain of Eternal Youth', whose healing waters would give health to all who drank of them. Ponce de Leon, Ayllon and de Narvaez all in turn obtained patents for the exploration of the land, but all found only disaster and death. De Soto had acquired great wealth as one of the leaders under Pizarro in Peru, and he determined to expend it in finding even greater riches in Florida. His renown attracted many recruits, and when he sailed from San Lucar for Florida in 1538 his force was the best equipped that had ever left Spain. The base for the expedition was to be Cuba, and de Soto sought and obtained the office of governor, though this was now of little account in the official hierarchy of the New World. But the island capital of Santiago in the extreme south-east of the island, which had been chosen for its convenience of access to Española, was unsuited to be the base of supply for an expedition to the north. De Soto therefore moved the seat of his government to the western end of the island, and there, on the site of modern Havana, he furthered the building of a real city. The whole of Cuba was requisitioned to supply stores for the Florida expedition, and when it sailed at length in May 1539 it left scarcity behind it. The complete failure of its hopes and the death of its leader were not fully known till 1543, and the only permanent result of de Soto's work was that in the intervening years the new city, from its convenience as

a port of call for homeward-bound ships from Mexico, soon eclipsed its eastern rival and began to be recognised as a centre second only in importance to Santo Domingo. But it was still far behind, for whereas Santo Domingo about 1540 had upwards of 1000 householders, the whole of Cuba contained only about 200 Spaniards and Santiago had sunk to only 30 white inhabitants. But the population of Havana was a fluctuating one, being greatly increased when the season for the homeward fleets arrived. It was essentially a strategic point and a port of call, and it was this that brought it into prominence when the maritime wars began.

The prosperity of the city of Santo Domingo was not solely dependent upon its being the capital and distributing centre for Española. It also was the first port of call in the Indies and the centre from which the attempts to colonise the north coast of South America were organised. The first inducement to these expeditions came from the pearl-fisheries, whose centre was on the island of Cubagua. In his third voyage (1498) Columbus discovered a great island that he named Trinidad, and behind it a high mainland coast which he judged to belong to a continent by reason of the great volumes of fresh water that poured forth from it into the sea, as we now know, from the river Orinoco. He passed out between the island and the coast of Paria by an opening that he called the Boca del Drago and coasted some distance westward along the mainland, being thus the first explorer to sight Tierra Ferme. Fuller disclosure came from the simultaneous but independent voyages of Alonso de Ojeda and Alonso Niño in 1499. The latter found the Indians friendly with the exception of the nomadic and ever-savage Caribs. Large quantities

of excellent pearls were obtained in return for a few trinkets, and the region came to be called the 'Pearl Coast'. The centre of the fisheries was found to be off the sterile islet of Cubagua near the island of Margarita. There a few years later a settlement was founded and named Nueva Cadiz, and by 1515 it had become one of the wealthiest and most populous places in the islands of the Caribbean. The pearl-fishing demanded large numbers of Indian divers, and this gave rise to constant slave raids with all their attendant atrocities along the adjacent mainland coast, and after 1520 a duel began between Gonzalo de Ocampo, the leading slave merchant, and Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, the 'apostle' and protector of the Indians, that led to grave difficulties for the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo, under whose control the whole region lay. After 1535 the pearl-fisheries of Cubagua declined owing to over-fishing, and by 1540 the town of Nueva Cadiz and the neighbouring coast were almost abandoned. Later the pearl-fisheries of the island of Margarita were opened, but by that time the Caribbean pearls were eclipsed by those that came from the Pearl Islands in the Gulf of Panama. By the end of the century pearl-fishing was replaced as the principal source of wealth on the coast by the salt-pans of Punta Araya in Venezuela, and these attracted a large amount of shipping.

The later importance of Santo Domingo and Havana was dependent rather on their value as centres of government and defence than as commercial ports for the colonies behind them. It was bound up with the management of the fleets that maintained intercourse between Spain and the Indies and brought back the annual cargoes of bullion that came from Mexico through Vera Cruz and from the mines of Peru across

the Isthmus of Panama. Those fleets became the object of attack for every pirate or privateer who sailed the sea, but even before their value mounted to its height, the jealousy of other powers was excited by Spain's monopoly of the wonderful riches of the New World, and she was called upon to guard it against the interference of men of other nations.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRST ATTACKS UPON SPANISH MONOPOLY, 1523-1559

THE earliest foreign ship-masters to find their way to the Indies were naturally Portuguese. They had long been accustomed to the trade with the Canaries, and it was at their own islands of the Azores that the Spanish vessels returning from the Indies usually touched before proceeding to Seville. There were Portuguese of all ranks in the Spanish service, of whom the most illustrious was Ferdinand Magellan, and thus the outlines of the sailing directions for the Caribbean were familiar to the Portuguese pilots. Clandestine voyages from Guinea to Española began very early, bringing both negro slaves and cargoes of manufactured goods wanted by the colonists. But these activities were not a serious threat to Spanish monopoly, for the Treaty of Tordesillas was so valuable to both the parties to it that it was certain that the King of Portugal would not support any seriously hostile action by his subjects. The first real danger came from the French in pursuit of the quarrel between Francis I and Charles V that broke into open war in 1521. We know that French corsairs with Palmier de Gonville were upon the coast of Brazil as early as 1504, and it is probable that some of them on their homeward voyages sailed through the Caribbean and touched at certain of the islands. But we have no precise information upon these



voyages, and the French pirates who attacked Spanish vessels returning from the Indies did so at first in European waters between the Azores and the coast of Andalusia.

Down to the first years of Charles V the commerce with the Indies was not organised with the rigidity that came later, and vessels sailed singly or in small groups without special precautions for defence. The first indication that a new problem of maritime warfare was appearing came with an affair that caused a real sensation in France and Spain and pointed the fact that the old days of unchallenged monopoly were at an end. In the early part of 1523 Cortez despatched to Spain as evidence of the richness of his conquest of Mexico for the Emperor a very valuable collection of gold ornaments, fine jewels and the beautiful feathered cloaks and head-dresses that were the spoils of Montezuma's palace. Off the Azores the vessels that carried these treasures were met by a fleet of French privateers belonging to the celebrated ship-owner Jean d'Ango of Dieppe and commanded by Jean Fleury. France and Spain were at war and the vessels from the Indies were fair game for the privateers. Though strongly armed caravels were sent out from Cadiz to aid in bringing the convoy into safety, the Frenchmen effected their purpose in part and, after a long running fight from the Azores, they cut off two of the richest galleons and compelled them to yield. Ango's booty was of astonishing value in the sight of his countrymen, who before had known nothing of the riches that Cortez was conquering for his master in Mexico. Fleury and other Norman privateers had captured off the Canaries and the Azores other Spanish vessels coming from Española, their cargoes merely consisting of hides, dye-woods and some sugar, but the

new prizes shewed that richer booty might be hoped for, and for the first time stories of Spanish treasure crossing the Atlantic began to excite the cupidity of the free-booters of the northern nations.

Probably French corsairs found their way to the Caribbean during the later years of the war, but we have no details of their depredations, and the first recorded account of the doings of a foreign ship in the Spanish Indies tells of an Englishman in 1527. The identity of the ship and its commander is not yet certain, but the outlines of the story are authentic beyond doubt. In the spring of that year Henry VIII changed sides in the great Habsburg-Valois struggle and took up the cause of France against his former ally Charles V. During the summer two king's ships, the *Mary of Gylford* and the *Samson*, under the command of one John Rut, were sent to the waters near Greenland, probably to search for a passage by the north-west to the dominions of the Grand Khan of Tartary. But in the letter which Rut sent home from Newfoundland and which has been preserved for us in the pages of Samuel Purchas there is a phrase which seems to indicate that there was an alternative purpose for the voyage, and that Wolsey and Henry VIII were also desirous of obtaining some first-hand information about the Indies, whence bullion was beginning to pour into the Emperor's coffers to maintain his armies in Europe. In a single phrase written in August 1527 Rut refers to his instructions and states that he is leaving Newfoundland to go to the islands 'that we are commanded by the grace of God as we were commanded at our departing'.

Those islands may or may not have been the Antilles, but the coincidence is tempting, for three months later we know from the Spanish records that a ship belonging

to the King of England came from the region of the fisheries in the north to the island of Mona between Puerto Rico and Española. In answer to questions as to what they wanted in the islands, the captain said that 'they wished to examine them in order to give the king of England an account thereof. . . . They inquired for the course to Santo Domingo and about the harbour there, and who was in charge of the island, as they wished to go and examine it.' They made notes of all they were told, and clearly it was information they were primarily seeking, for they made no great efforts to trade with the linens and woollens of their cargo. At Santo Domingo they were received with consternation by the authorities. No foreign ship had ever entered the harbour, and the *audiencia* was at a loss what to do with men who clearly offended against the regulations prohibiting the Indies to all but Spaniards. However, the matter settled itself, for the Englishmen suspected treachery and departed suddenly. Three or four days later a party of them landed farther along the coast in search of provisions and took by force all they could obtain from the estates near-by. 'They made threats against everybody in the city [of Santo Domingo] and against the city itself, saying that they would assemble as many as six ships and come to this island, and that their sole purpose now was to become acquainted with its ports against their return.' All the evidence points to the fact that this was no mere raid by private men but a fully instructed reconnaissance. Whether the ship survived to carry the information obtained back to England we do not know. Oviedo says that in his time it was supposed that she never arrived in Europe, because no news was ever had of her, but in any event whatever information she had collected was not used. Henry

neglected to follow up the idea with which the voyage had been set forth, and many years elapsed before there was another English scare in the West Indies.

The French struggle to open the navigation of the ocean and to secure the freedom of the seas was directed more against the Portuguese claims to monopoly in Guinea and Brazil than against the Spaniards in the Antilles. But Charles V was entirely ready to support the claims of John III, and from 1531 to 1536 a great diplomatic battle was fought at the Court of France between the Portuguese envoys and Jean Ango, who had obtained letters of reprisal for injuries that he claimed his ships had suffered, and proposed to carry out those reprisals in the waters off the Azores. There Spanish ships were certain to suffer as well as Portuguese, and it was reported to Spain that Ango's plans contemplated action in the Antilles as well. It was said (September 1531) that a fleet of thirteen vessels and 3000 men was being fitted out at Dieppe to attack Havana and Nombre de Dios, but this was a blind and the vessels did not proceed farther than the Azores, where they lay in wait to capture the Portuguese spice fleet returning from the East Indies. However, the Caribbean project was only deferred, and five years later, with the outbreak of a new war between France and Spain, it was taken up by the French privateers in earnest, since all attacks against Portuguese ships were strictly forbidden (1536) and those undertaking them were threatened with the severe penalties of piracy.

Single French corsairs at first began the attack, and the booty some of them brought back from their assaults upon Spanish ships in the Bahama Channel (December 1536) was so great that many others were tempted to follow them. Under the leadership of Ango a real plan

of campaign was set on foot to capture the treasure fleet of Blasio Nuñez Vela bringing the spoils of Peru (1537). That the prize was worth capture is evident from the accounts of the Casa de Contratación, which shew that although nine vessels were cut off and captured by the corsairs, the remainder who escaped brought treasure worth 280 millions of maravedis (*i.e.* £1,960,000) on the Emperor's account to Seville. Terror reigned in the West Indies, where Santo Domingo momentarily awaited attack by a squadron of French corsairs who had sacked many of the open towns lying along the shores of Española and had captured numerous Spanish vessels between the mainland and the islands. La Yaguana (Port au Prince), Puerto Hermoso, Ocoa and other places were captured and burned and only Puerto Rico and Santiago de Cuba succeeded in beating off the raiders. The truce of Nice (1538) put a stop to the menace for a time, but it was clear that it was only deferred and that if the Emperor was to guard his threatened monopoly he must do so upon an organised scale. The colonists were incessant in their demands for protection, and the losses that the Indies had already suffered were amply sufficient to support their protests against their defenceless condition.

The answer to these petitions was the organisation of heavily armed and defended convoys, though the system did not assume until 1562 the final shape that it kept for a hundred and fifty years. It is unnecessary to enter in detail into the various modifications that were tried between 1543 and 1564, but the system had so profound an influence upon the history of the West Indies during the maritime wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that we must here describe its

traditional arrangements in outline. The first ordinance requiring ships passing to and from the Indies to sail in one or another of two semi-annual convoyed fleets was promulgated in 1543 on the outbreak of Charles V's third war with France. In 1553, by a new ordinance, the *armadas* convoying the fleets were strengthened to four heavily armed ships-of-war each, which when they reached the Caribbean were to disperse. One warship was to convoy the merchantmen for Santo Domingo and the islands, the second those going direct to Nombre de Dios with the cargoes for Peru and the remaining two accompanying the fleet towards Mexico as far as Cape San Antonio, where they were to leave it and steer eastwards to their oversea base at Havana. The seat of the Governor of Cuba was permanently removed to that port and it became thenceforward the most important strategic point in the West Indies. It was the port of reunion of all homeward-bound vessels but those from Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico, and as it took a considerable time for them to assemble, its harbour became a scene of great activity and the city began to acquire a numerous population engaged in repairing shipyards and provision stores. The cost of the *armadas* was borne from a tax charged upon the merchants transporting goods. The system was fully worked out upon paper, but its regulations were not strictly enforced, and single ships or small groups often took the risk of crossing the Atlantic alone, trusting to their own armament or swiftness to escape the corsairs.

A series of ordinances promulgated by Philip II between 1564 and 1566 prescribed the regulations that governed the Indies fleets for a century and a half, but many exceptions were permitted and circumstances of war and weather often prevented any strict adherence

to their very detailed provisions. However, in general outline the system was adhered to, and in all probability it was much more successful in achieving its aim, the defence of Spain's communications with her colonies during a period of constant wars, than any freer or less highly organised scheme. Two annual fleets were arranged for, the first sailing in April or May for the Gulf of Mexico accompanied by smaller numbers of vessels for Honduras, Española and the other islands, the second leaving San Lucar (the port of Seville) in August for Nombre de Dios and Tierra Ferme. On their return in January the fleets left the Isthmus where there had assembled before that date the ships coming from the ports on the north coast of South America. These Panama fleets in later years came to be known popularly as 'the galleons'. The Mexican fleet, or *flota*, as it was popularly called, sailed from Vera Cruz in February, and both galleons and *flota* assembled at Havana whence they sailed in company for Seville in the middle of March. Each fleet was separately organised with its own guard-ships under the command of its own general and rear-admiral.

The course of each fleet was as traditional as its organisation and dates of sailing. Leaving San Lucar, the port of Seville at the mouth of the Guadalquivir, the ships steered south-west to the Canaries, an eight days' voyage. There in the sixteenth century they stayed for some days to complete their equipment and provisions, and after leaving they dropped down until they caught the trade winds about the parallel of 16 degrees. Thenceforward the course was due west, and hardly a sail needed to be changed as the *flotas* moved forward before the steady breeze until, after some twenty-five to thirty days, one of the Lesser Antilles

was sighted, usually Deseada or Guadeloupe. Thence the two fleets steered different courses; the galleons for Tierra Ferme and the Isthmus passed still westward to Cartagena, dropping the supply ships for the pearl fishers at Margarita on the way; but the *flota* for Mexico steered north-west from Deseada until they reached the Mona Passage between Puerto Rico and Española. On the way they watered at Dominica or in a bay at the eastern end of Española. Merchantmen dropped from the *flota* on its way to enter San Juan de Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo or Santiago de Cuba as they were passed in turn, and at last off Cape San Antonio the remainder of the fleet turned southward to reach its final destination at Vera Cruz. The outward voyage before the favouring trades was much less difficult and dangerous than the homeward. The attacks of corsairs were less to be feared and there was little of the uncertain and stormy weather that sometimes took toll of the ships from the dreaded coral reefs of the Bermudas, which the Spaniards called the 'Isles of Storms', right across to the Azores.

Leaving Nombre de Dios or later Puerto Bello with the treasure that had been brought across the Isthmus by trains of porters or on mule-back from Panama, the returning galleons sailed back to Cartagena, where they waited ten days to load the gold, cochineal, hides and cacao from the Spanish Main and the pearls of Margarita. Thence they directed their course for a sail of eight days past Jamaica and the Isle of Pines till they rounded Cape San Antonio and came to anchor behind the strong forts of Havana erected by Philip II between 1560 and 1566. Before that date the last refitting and revictualling port was Santo Domingo, and the ships left the islands through the Mona Passage, but the



fleets were then much smaller and less valuable. Vera Cruz lies far to the leeward of Cuba, and at certain times of the year fierce 'northers' sweep down the Gulf of Mexico, so that the Mexican *flota* waited to make its long and difficult voyage of twenty days to Havana until the fair weather of April and May. During those months the strongest port in the Indies was the scene of such bustle and gaiety as it never knew in the rest of the year. Lodgings in the city commanded fabulous prices, and touts and gamesters found rich prey among the colonists returning with full pockets from every part of the Indies.

The Bahama Channel, through which the returning fleets made their way northward to catch off the Virginia capes the uncertain winds that would carry them eastwards across the Atlantic, was the most dangerous pass of all. Not only was its navigation difficult by reason of its many reefs and shoals and its frequent hurricanes, but to the eastward lay the maze of cays and sandy islands of the Bahamas that afforded numberless hiding holes for the pirates who lay in wait to snap up any straying vessel from the fleets or even to essay the cutting off of some rich galleon from under the very guns of the *armada*. Once these dangers were passed, the rough weather of the Atlantic had to be faced, and when at last the Azores were sighted the fleets had literally to run the gauntlet all the way to the Spanish coast. Men-of-war of every nation and of none infested the waters round the islands, and rarely could a Spanish vessel get through without a fight or a chase by some French or Cornish corsair or, even more dangerous, some Turkish rover out of Algiers or Sallee at whose hands no mercy could be expected. Regular naval squadrons, the Armadas de la Guardia de la Carrera de

las Indias, policed the narrow waters between the Canaries, Cape St. Vincent and the Azores ever since the French menace became serious in 1523, but it was impossible to be on guard everywhere, and a homeward bound plate fleet hardly ever got through to the Guadalquivir without some loss.

In the Caribbean the depredations of the French were so much greater during the war of 1542-44 that squadrons of swift, well-armed frigates were specially detached from the *armadas* to clear the sea of the raiders. Isolated privateers or small groups of them could ravage defenceless parts of the islands with impunity, but they knew they could not escape properly led royal ships. The waters off the Greater Antilles were rapidly cleared; the attack passed to the coast of Tierra Ferme, and there in July 1543 New Cadiz in Cubagua was raided and burned by 800 Frenchmen with six ships. They passed on to sack Santa Marta and win a booty estimated at 35,000 pesos, and a year later the same force returned to attack the city once more, but were beaten off by the brave resistance of the inhabitants. As soon as they learned from their spies that the guard-ships were being ordered in from cruising so as to escort the *flotas* back from Havana to Spain, the rovers likewise drew in to watch the Bahama Channel or the Mona Passage and the citizens of Santo Domingo had incessantly to be on the look-out to guard against surprise.

With the close of the war by the Treaty of Crespy (1544) the danger was somewhat relieved, for Francis I acknowledged Spain's rights in the Caribbean and forbade his subjects to sail thither. But when once more in 1552 France took up arms against Spain in Europe more determined raids than ever were launched against the Antilles. François Le Clerc, known to the Spaniards

as Pié de Palo, early in 1553 led a squadron of ten royal ships across the Atlantic and methodically pillaged the undefended settlements and small ports on the coast of Puerto Rico and Española with such thoroughness that his name became a word of dread from one end of the Indies to another. In 1554 he captured and sacked Santiago de Cuba with a booty of 80,000 pesos, but it was his Lutheran lieutenant Jacques de Sores who led his Frenchmen to a more resounding exploit, the capture of Havana. For eighteen days in July 1555 the settlement lay at Sores' mercy, and when its plundered citizens had nothing left to pay him ransom he burned Havana to the ground and sailed away to try for the richer prize of Santo Domingo. So utterly did he devastate the settlement that when another French squadron came again a few months later there was nothing left to pillage. The Truce of Vaucelles (1556) brought a respite, but two years later the traffic of the islands was brought almost to a standstill by fear of the corsairs, and it could be said that three or four French ships were as much the masters of the sea of Mexico as the King of Spain was master of the Guadalquivir.

The raids of privateers and small squadrons had clearly done so much harm to the enemy that it appeared as though an operation undertaken against the Indies on a considerable scale might deal him a staggering blow, and in September 1559 we find the ministers of Henri II setting forth in an official despatch and in unmistakable terms the first of those plans for a systematic attack upon the sources of the King of Spain's treasures which were to be the constant dream of statesmen for many generations. Since the treasures of gold and silver coming from Peru by the South Sea were all collected at Nombre de Dios in the month of May, a

strong squadron of a dozen ships of war sent to arrive in the Antilles at that time might ruin the Spanish navigation at a single blow. On their way to Nombre de Dios they could sack Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico, which were ill defended, and a landing force of some 1200 men might march across the Isthmus and surprise the South Sea fleet in Panama Harbour while the booty of Nombre de Dios was safely aboard the ships of France. Sailing northwards along the coast of Honduras the squadron would attack the *flota* of New Spain when it left Vera Cruz in June, and, returning through the Florida Channel, the expedition as its final exploit might destroy the new fortifications that the King of Spain was beginning at Havana. Thus such fear would be spread through the Indies and all those who traded there, that for two years not a single sou would come to Philip II's coffers.

It is of great interest to find thus early expressed the ideas that were to inspire so many of Spain's maritime enemies from Drake and Hawkins on to Piet Hein and so to Cromwell with his 'Western Design'. They sprang in all probability from the mind of Gaspar de Coligny, the great Admiral of France, who in the very month that Henri II's despatch was written (September 1558) was planning the first French colony on the shores of Brazil. But to set forth the plan was easier than to carry it out, as so many sailors were to find, but the French never made the attempt. The war in Europe was nearing its end and peace negotiations were already on foot. By the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis (April 1559) the Habsburg-Valois quarrel of sixty years was brought to an end with a division of what had been won on both sides, but it was greatly to France's disadvantage. She was left with some solid territorial gains upon her land frontiers.

But at sea everything she had attempted was thrown away. Philip's plenipotentiaries were able to compel the French negotiators to renounce any opposition to his monopoly of the waters of the Indies, and the old Emperor's advice to his son before his abdication was thus proved to be soundly based. The French were prone in treaty negotiations to make high-sounding demands, but their monarchs and their statesmen were inconstant and would always abate their claims if they were stoutly denied. Charles V knew his Valois rivals of old and his estimate of their lack of consistent interest in the maritime affairs that were now of such vital importance to Spain was undoubtedly right. But new and more obstinate opponents to her oceanic monopoly were stirring, as Philip II was to find to his cost.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BEGINNINGS OF THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE, 1502-1569

THE first efforts of foreign interlopers to secure a share of the trade with the Spanish colonists in the newly settled islands were closely concerned with their difficulties of labour supply. Down to the close of the French wars the enterprises were almost wholly in the hands of the Portuguese, and it was not until the celebrated three voyages of John Hawkins in 1562-63, 1564-65 and 1567-68 that more than an occasional English ship was seen in the West Indies. But many points in connection with those voyages can only be explained by reference to earlier events, and we must return to the early period of the colonies to trace the beginning of the negro slave-trade which played so vital a part in later West Indian history.

The traditional story attributes the introduction of negro slaves to the advice of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas to Ferdinand and Isabella. It is said that in pursuit of his charitable plans to assuage the sufferings of the enslaved Indians and the barbarities of the system of *encomiendas* he recommended that negroes should be purchased in the slave factories of the Portuguese upon the coast of Guinea and imported into Española and Cuba for work in the mines. That he was concerned in the plans for organising and even for extending the trade is true enough, and later in his life he repented

bitterly of what he had done. But the story that he was the first to plan the traffic we now know to be untrue, for it had begun on a considerable scale some years before, and Las Casas had little to do with its development.

The first negro slaves brought to the Antilles were purchased or bred in Spain and were transported in the service of the colonists who went out with Nicolas de Ovando in 1502. By 1506 many blacks were employed in the mines of Española and official regulations were prescribed for their control and their conversion to Christianity. Before 1517 we know that there were some negroes in Puerto Rico, Cuba and Jamaica and upon the first mainland settlements of Darien. But these slaves had been introduced singly by individual colonists and there was nothing of the nature of a regular trade bringing negroes in numbers. The first trace of importation on a large scale appears with the issue in 1510 of royal orders to the Casa de Contratación to send out 250 blacks to Española to be sold to the colonists for work in the gold mines. In 1513 a licence tax was levied on all slaves imported into the islands, and this, added to the acute shortage of labour in the colony, promoted contraband slaving voyages direct from Guinea by Portuguese speculators.

To place importation on a regular footing and to prevent frauds upon the revenue the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo in 1518 petitioned the Crown to arrange a regular contract or *asiento* with the King of Portugal for the supply of blacks, but their suggestion for direct royal management of the business was not accepted. The new sovereign, King Charles, bestowed the privilege of importation on Laurent de Gouvenot, Governor of Brésa and Master of the Royal Household, merely

as a lucrative mark of favour, and under it the favourite disposed of licences for the highest prices he could get. The grant conferred the sole right of transporting negroes to the West Indies up to the number of 4000 without paying any duty or tax. The concessionaires might load the slaves in Guinea or any other place whence it was customary to bring them, and they might transport them either to Portugal or into the Spanish dominions.

Thus for the first time a direct and organised trade was opened between the slave marts of Africa and the plantations of the West Indies. It was not until the close of the sixteenth century that the more elaborate form of the true general *asiento* or government contract was worked out. The Governor of Brésa sold licences for importation of varying numbers of negroes to merchants of Seville among whom were certain Genoese who had close connections with slave-trading firms in Lisbon, and thus Italians and Portuguese were associated with the traffic from its beginning on an organised scale. A quarter of the negroes were transported to Cuba and the remaining three-quarters to Española and Puerto Rico, whence some of them were sold to the rudimentary settlements on the mainland. The price of negro slaves to the colonists was raised by the licensees and this naturally further stimulated smuggling unlicensed traders.

The exodus of Spaniards from the islands to the conquest of Mexico and Peru led to an alarming disproportion between whites and blacks, and this made the danger of servile revolt an ever present menace. Oviedo tells us that, by reason of all the negroes employed, Española had come in his time to be 'an image of Ethiopia'. As early as 1527 a rising of the blacks, aided



by the *cimarrones* from the interior, threatened Puerto Rico with complete devastation, and in subsequent years Española was repeatedly disturbed by similar revolts. Drastic regulations were imposed against the sale of arms to any unauthorised person, and frequent man-hunts were organised to recover escaped slaves and to destroy their places of assemblage in the dense jungles of the interior. Thus in the first half-century of European occupation of the islands we find all the conditions in full operation that made the defence and preservation of order in the West Indies a constant problem to their white planters throughout their blood-stained history.

In 1538, when the Governor of Brésa's licence had run out, Charles V conceded a new monopoly to two German merchants of Seville for the introduction of 4000 negroes in four years and for their sale in America, at or below an agreed maximum price of forty ducats. In return for the grant the Germans paid the sum of 20,000 ducats to the Royal Treasury, and thus an essential feature of subsequent *asientos* was introduced. The Crown leased a valuable privilege for an immediate return, and thus the contract came to play an important part in the finances of Spain's colonial empire. The planters complained bitterly of the new contract and urged the Crown to retain the importation in the hands of its own officials as more profitable in the long run and less oppressive to the colonies, but the needs of the Emperor for ready money were too insistent to let him listen, and under Philip II the system of selling *asientos* for the importation of negroes to the highest bidder became an essential feature of colonial management, and the prices that were offered for the monopoly steadily increased. The speculators could well afford to

pay for their privileges, for a male adult negro who could be bought in 1536 at Cape Verde for twenty ducats would fetch eighty or a hundred *pesos de oro* in Española, though women were worth only half these prices. The mortality on the voyage was, of course, very high, but profits of 200 or 300 per cent. were to be hoped for if all went well.

A clear distinction was made between domestic slaves, whether white, Moorish, half-breed or even blacks, and the raw *bozal* negroes direct from the African jungle. The former slaves were not included under the general licences at all and they could not be dealt with according to their terms. Those only applied to the cargoes obtained in Guinea to the south of Cape Verde and in the region of Manicongo, the modern Angola. The negroes from the region north of Cape Verde, and especially from the Upper Senegal, were found very fierce and intractable, and the importation of these *jelofes*, as they were called, was forbidden by a law of 1532. Though theoretically all the commerce of the Indies was strictly reserved to native-born Spaniards (or even at one time Castilians), most of the contractors who purchased licences about the middle of the sixteenth century were foreigners. They did not belong to independent powers like France or England, it is true, but were German, Flemish or Italian subjects of the Emperor, or Portuguese who occupied an exceptional position. The whole thing illustrates the impossibility of completely applying exclusive regulations and the failure, even in its early years, of Spain's system of commercial restriction. The wealth of the Indies could not be confined to the enrichment of Spaniards alone, for if it were to be cultivated the assistance of merchants of other nations was necessary. The Portuguese, as owners

of the factories on the African coast, were the most numerous competitors in the slave trade, and in 1558 Manoel Caldera, who farmed the rights of the King of Portugal to the exploitation of the Guinea Coast, not only took out for himself a licence for the importation of 2000 negroes, but also covenanted to supply various persons of position who held licences with the numbers of negroes they required. Thus the trade of Portuguese Africa was coming to find its largest market in the Spanish Indies, and an intimate complementary relationship was set up between the two sides of the Atlantic that was to persist down to the middle of the nineteenth century. The Portuguese were the most pertinacious contrabandists in the Indies in the sixteenth century, and Herrera describes for us how their caravels voyaged constantly from Teneriffe or Las Palmas, from Lisbon or Cape Verde, across to the islands laden with contraband negroes and provisions of all kinds for sale to the colonists. When they had got rid of their cargo, they loaded up again in one of the out-of-the-way creeks of the Antilles with leather or hides, sugar or dye-woods, and even gave passage at high rates to some rich colonists who were willing to take the risk of landing in the Azores or at Lisbon in order to avoid the exactions of the Customs officers at Seville.

The period between the expiry of the general German licence in 1532 and Philip II's occupation of Portugal in 1580 saw many offers for the re-establishment of a monopoly or general *asiento*, but none was accepted, for the Treasury was always anxious to get ready-money payments and could not afford to look far ahead. Licences for importation were sold for specified numbers of negroes to many contractors, and several of them were usually running at one time. It became

a common practice for individual settlements to enter into contracts with slave-dealers to import cargoes of negroes in bulk at a flat rate per head and then for the local officials to dispose of them by retail to the planters at varying prices according to quality. Thus trading by bargain with individual slavers became familiar in the coast settlements of the islands, and this greatly facilitated the operations of unlicensed contraband traders. They could very easily pretend to hold a permit under one of the many licences for importation, though really they had paid no duty to the Crown and so could afford to offer their negroes to the colonists at very low prices. Despite incessant complaints from the home authorities in Spain and threats of very severe punishment, the efforts of the royal officers to put down these frauds upon the revenue met with little success. The control of distant dependencies in matters where personal interest pulled in a different direction from public duty was far too difficult to be satisfactorily accomplished by the imperfect governmental machinery of sixteenth-century Spain. In these facts there lies the explanation of much that would otherwise be obscure in the epoch of maritime struggle that opened soon after the accession of Elizabeth to the English throne.

The first infringement by Englishmen of the Caribbean preserve of Spain was closely bound up with the slave trade and has usually been taken as a smuggling venture or even rank piracy on the part of John Hawkins. A fuller exploration of the scattered evidence has, however, proved that there were ideas of policy at the back of the enterprises and that they marked the first bid by English merchants for a share of the Caribbean trade. Their bid failed, for the exclusive policy of Spain was now far too firmly riveted to admit anyone to peace-

ful partnership in the opportunities of the New World. That could only be won from her by force. But within Hawkins' schemes there were the first stirrings of a long train of development that came to be a fundamental feature of our national policy, and henceforward, both in peace and war, American trade was included among the foremost objects of English statesmen.

In the opening years of Elizabeth's reign the alignment of the powers on the stage of world politics was still to all appearance the same as it had been since the beginning of the century. Spain and France were ranged against one another with England playing an uncertain part between, but generally siding with the Hapsburgs in continuance of our traditional alliance with the rulers of the Netherlands. For more than thirty years France had been using her corsairs in the Caribbean to weaken her enemy whether there were nominal peace or open war, but the Spaniards had evolved no satisfactory means of defence against their depredations. The essential idea of Hawkins' plan as he evolved it in the years 1558-62 seems to have been to win from Philip II permission to participate in the American trade in return for assistance in policing the Caribbean against pirates and French contraband traders. We cannot trace the activities of the latter as easily as the more notorious depredations of the corsairs, but as early as 1549 royal orders were sent to the Antilles to prohibit trading with them, and from thence onwards until about 1580 there are many indications in the Spanish records that French vessels were supplying a large part of the colonists' requirements of manufactured goods and carrying away much of their produce to Rouen and Dieppe. If Hawkins could get his services accepted by Philip II, he would be in a privileged position and could cut out the

French. He would thus be able to bring to London valuable cargoes of the West Indian products whose supply was artificially restricted by lack of defence, though the demand for them was constantly increasing upon the European markets.

On the commercial side, Hawkins knew from his experience in the trade of the Canaries and Seville that there was a steady demand among the colonists for manufactured goods and negro slaves. If he could get the chance to supply them, he might make two or three separate profits in the course of a single round voyage. To procure the negroes he must disregard Portuguese prohibitions against trade upon the African coast; but this was nothing new, for English merchants had been flouting the Portuguese claims upon the Gold Coast with impunity for ten years or more. The opposition of the contractors to whom the King of Portugal farmed the privilege of the slave trade was little to be feared, for it was impossible to keep out interlopers everywhere along a coast-line comprising more than 1000 miles of undefended creeks and rivers from Cape Verde to Sierra Leone and Cape Palmas. With his cargo aboard, Hawkins knew that the passage across to the West Indies was easy, and there it only remained to be seen whether the colonists' desire for cheap goods would be sufficient to overcome their respect for the prohibitions of the Crown against unlicensed trade—a perennial question whose interest was to last for two centuries or more.

The change between the circumstances wherein Hawkins could plan the first of his three voyages with a confident expectation of Spanish toleration and the tragically different situation after the disastrous ending to the third marks the opening of an entirely new

chapter in the world's history. The full story of the voyages has been told for the first time in all its details by Dr. J. A. Williamson in his *Life of John Hawkins*,<sup>1</sup> and we need only touch upon it where it reveals something of the conditions in the Antilles, for the incidents connected with the capture of the slaves on the west coast of Africa lie outside our West Indian theme.

To finance his expedition Hawkins obtained the help of a syndicate of London merchants interested in the well-established English trade to the Canaries and Guinea, and he sailed from Plymouth in command of three ships in October 1562. He called first at Teneriffe, where he concerted his plans with one of the agents of the syndicate who had made arrangements with certain colonists in Española to buy Hawkins' goods and negroes when he arrived. Passing on from the islands to the African coast, he compelled the Portuguese he found there to trade with him and loaded up with about 400 negroes between Cape Verde and Sierra Leone. In April 1563 the ships arrived off the north coast of Española and, despite some protestations, Hawkins found little difficulty in selling both his slaves and his general cargo. He was very scrupulous, in fact almost ostentatious, in paying all the regular royal dues and customs and obtaining from the local authorities of the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo certificates permitting him to trade and vouching for his peaceable and orderly proceedings. It is clear that he was determined to mark clearly the difference between a friendly English trader and an enemy corsair with the hope of winning special privileges from Spain. Three ports were visited, Ysabela, Puerto Plata and Monte Christi, all on the north coast

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins: the Time and the Man* (Oxford 1927).

of Española and far removed from the seat of government, where there would be no hesitation in taking drastic measures to enforce legal restrictions against a foreigner. But in the remote colonial ports Hawkins did a brisk trade, for not only were his own ships fully laden, but two caravels were also chartered, one belonging to an owner in the island and the other Portuguese. The cargoes consisted of hides and sugar, together with a certain quantity of gold, silver and pearls. The two caravels were sent direct to Spain, but the Portuguese carried the first into Lisbon and it was arrested, while the second was confiscated on arriving at Seville and its crew imprisoned. Hawkins visited Spain in the following year to petition for their release and to press on his plans for opening a privileged trade, but he really had no prospect of success, for Anglo-Spanish relations were rapidly going from bad to worse and Englishmen were beginning to be reputed in Spain as worse pirates and enemies than the French. That reputation was not yet deserved, though its time was not far distant.

The officials who had come into contact with the English intruders were the subject of severe action by their superiors, and in their despatches of excuse we can learn incidentally something of the conditions of Española seventy years after the foundation of the colony.

Ysabela, the original seat of government, was now nothing but a hamlet in the unpopulated regions lying between the settlements of Monte Christi and Puerto Plata, a distance of some sixty miles. But behind these lay the prosperous region of La Vega with its city of Santiago and its new sugar plantations. It was for these that the planters needed negroes, and they could exchange for them and for European goods hides from



the cattle on their ranches or from the ownerless herds that roamed the upper hills. These hides would fetch in Europe five or even ten times as much as had to be paid for them in the island. To the west of Monte Christi the country was much more rugged and densely wooded, and it contained no Spaniards save possibly a few hunters in pursuit of the wild cattle. To get from Santo Domingo to the northern coast involved a toilsome and even dangerous march through the woods, for usually communications went by sea. The officers who were sent up from the city to check Hawkins' trading gathered their men together by requisition from the plantations they passed on the pretext that they were proceeding to disperse an assemblage of revolted negroes, a sure indication of the ever-present dread of servile rebellion.

Before Hawkins could get ready for a second voyage we have some indications that he had imitators and that in 1564-65 Englishmen who had seized negroes in Africa were selling them at Puerto Rico when they were arrested. Hawkins, however, did not aim at the islands in his second voyage; he hoped to get better prices and find a richer return cargo in the settlements of Tierra Ferme, where there was by this date a large population and more gold and pearls to be obtained than in Española. His business prospered, though occasionally he had to threaten the use of force to compel the colonists to begin dealing. Practically all of his negroes were sold, and besides considerable quantities of gold and pearls he filled his holds with hides that were bought at a ridiculously cheap rate. Some of them were obtained at an island that was later to play a very important part in the smuggling trade with the Spanish Main. Curaçao was at this date nothing but a great

cattle ranch, and its population was small, but the excellence of its harbour made it an admirable port of call for those who wished to trade along the adjacent mainland coast. Hawkins intended to touch Española and Cuba on his return voyage, but English pilots were still too inexperienced in the navigation of the Caribbean to make their courses always as they wished, and both Española and Jamaica were oversailed, while the position of Havana could not be found at all. Even in European waters navigation was something of a matter of lucky chance, but in the Indies it was a real gamble with the unknown, with none but a few isolated settlements scattered remotely along the coasts, and elsewhere nothing but the primeval swamps and forest.

Passing out on his return voyage through the Florida Channel, Hawkins had still an important part of his purpose to accomplish, to see what was being accomplished in the new post that Coligny's strategic genius was trying to found on the Florida coast with the idea of dominating the best exit from the sea where Spanish and French sailors had been struggling for maritime command for forty years. To the English government the possibility of the establishment of such a strong point in the hands of its allies among the French Protestants was a matter of great interest, but Coligny's idea was before its time and beyond the practical means he had to accomplish it. Hawkins found the French captain, René de Laudonnière, and his handful of men on the river of May in a state approaching starvation and eagerly looking for relief. Hawkins was still anxious to commend his services to the King of Spain, and nothing could be more welcome than the removal of his enemies from the very point where their energies might be most mischievous. But Laudonnière declined all

offers of a passage to Europe and persisted in his attempt to maintain his post until the arrival of the promised relief. The Englishmen therefore passed on to reach home (September 1565) by way of the fisheries of Newfoundland and to bring a profit of more than sixty per cent. to their owners.

An interval of two years elapsed before Hawkins was able to renew his attempt to secure the footing of a licensed sharer in the trade of the West Indies, and in that time changes came about that made such an idea manifestly impossible. A Spanish naval commander of first-rate ability applied his energies to the evolution of a satisfactory system of defence against the French corsairs, and the rising tide of disorder in France threw the Crown into a growing dependence upon Spain and an acceptance of her maritime claims that left the corsairs without commissions and in the position of mere pirates. Pero Menendez de Aviles first took out an armada of six fighting ships to convoy a fleet home from the Indies in 1555-56, and in 1561 he applied for the official rank of Captain-General of the Indies Trade in recompense for the work he had already done for the defence of the convoys. In 1562 he convoyed a *flota* of forty-nine ships, the largest that till then had left Spain, and he had a considerable influence in the drawing up of the celebrated series of ordinances for the management of the convoys that were issued in 1564-66 and provided the form in which the system persisted. He saw that to police the Caribbean it was necessary to have light mobile squadrons of vessels that could out-sail the corsairs, and he developed and made efficient the *armadillas* of such ships that had occasionally been organised at Santo Domingo after 1550 when the raiders had become particularly dangerous. As they

were driven out from the Caribbean the Frenchmen tended to hang about the exit from the Florida Channel, and Menendez impressed upon Philip II the necessity not only of strengthening the fortifications of Havana to make it an impregnable port of assembly, but also of establishing Spanish occupation of the coast of Florida so as to police it against the French. He clearly anticipated Coligny's ideas of its great strategic importance in the system of West Indian defence, and his schemes for the building of a Spanish fortress there were far advanced before Laudonnière's attempt to establish the French upon the coast. It was imperatively necessary to clear out the intruders, and a powerful naval and military force was entrusted to his command. The resulting 'Florida massacre', in which Ribault and his shipwrecked crews were destroyed, was a terrible lesson that gravely embittered the struggle that was now entering upon a new phase wherein all the rancour of religious strife was added to the rivalry of nations for trade and territory. But Menendez had achieved his aim. His new fortress of St. Augustine set an outer bastion for the defence of Spanish power to the north, and France was removed from Spain's path as a serious competitor in the New World for many years.

It was, of course, not the destruction of Ribault and his disorganised handfuls of Huguenot heretics that brought about the eclipse of a rival who alone had contested Spain's monopoly in the Indies for two generations. For that a momentous change in the political alignment in Europe was responsible, and we have the first illustration of the truth that the fate of the outer lands is moulded less by what happens within them than by the results of what happens at the centre of world affairs. France, which had been unified and therefore

strong under the early Valois, was dissolved into warring factions under their successors, and the monarchy over which they fought was forced to rely for support upon its old enemy, Spain, and to relinquish hostility to her maritime claims. The leadership in the struggle passed to Philip's quondam ally, England, and the Spaniard replaced the Frenchman as the traditional national enemy with momentous results in many spheres.

The time for Hawkins' schemes was clearly past, but he resolved to try once more his assumed rôle of a peaceful and friendly trader in the Indies for a third time on a larger scale than before. The bluff was extraordinarily bold, but it could not succeed in the face of the more stringent discipline and efficiency which Menendez' energy had infused into the colonial officials. But the venture went on; the old show of civility was indulged in along the ports of Tierra Ferme, though the force behind it was more in evidence and there were no scruples in using it when trade was declined. Hawkins at first kept away from the centres of Spanish power, and especially Santo Domingo, where there would have been little hesitation in treating him as an enemy corsair. But at last, as he was trying to return and with much less satisfactory cargoes than before, the fates turned wholly against him. Storms drove him back from his way of escape through the Florida Channel and forced him to the very bottom of the Gulf of Mexico, the almost inviolate preserve of the Caribbean where no foreign corsair had yet penetrated. His only chance to repair the damage that his ships had suffered in the hurricanes was to try once more the plea that he had so often used before, and to seek succour in the roadstead of San Juan de Ulua, though he knew that the annual *flota* guarded by a

strong *armada* was daily expected there. The tragic result is one of the most familiar stories of naval history.

Hawkins arrived with his storm-beaten vessels on 15 September 1569, and was able to enter the anchorage by surprise without a shot, but he had merely a day's respite, for on the 17th the expected fleet arrived with the new Viceroy of Mexico, Don Martin Enriquez, on board. The Englishmen were faced with a terrible dilemma. Their Queen was at peace with Spain, and to keep the fleet out of its own port would be rank piracy, while to permit the ships to enter without terms would be to lay themselves open to the fate that Menendez had meted out to Ribault and his Huguenots in Florida three years before. However, Hawkins had to take the risk, and after a long negotiation terms were agreed upon under which he was to be permitted to repair his ships and buy victuals for the homeward voyage. But the Viceroy had no intention of keeping faith with the intruders. They were trespassers in forbidden waters, who in three successive voyages had broken every one of the prohibitions on which the whole system of the Indies was based, and they must take the consequences. The Spanish vessels entered the anchorage on the morning of 21 September, and for two days there was a lull before the storm broke. At eight o'clock on the morning of the 23rd the attack began in overwhelming force and within a few hours all was over. By nightfall, of the 300-odd Englishmen under Hawkins's command nearly 100 had been killed or taken; the flagship, the Queen's *Jesus of Lubeck*, and two others were lost, and the survivors of the crews only saved themselves by crowding into the *Minion* with Hawkins and the little *Judith* with Francis Drake. Neither had victuals

enough to take them home; but the *Minion* was in the worse plight, for she was hopelessly overcrowded with the 200 men aboard. Many of them felt that they would have a better chance if they landed on the unexplored coast of the continent and tramped through the wilds towards the northern fisheries, where they hoped to find English ships to carry them home. So Hawkins gave them their choice, and 100 men decided to go, while 100 stood by the ship. Few of those who landed ever saw England again, for most of them perished in the wilderness; and of the others who fell into the hands of the Spaniards, only six or seven survived after long years of confinement in the prisons of the Indies. But Hawkins and the rest were little better off, for when on 25 January 1569 the battered *Minion* staggered into Plymouth Sound, only fifteen famine-stricken survivors remained of the 100 men who had stayed with their commander.

Drake with the *Judith* had left Hawkins on the night of the disaster in a way that the latter felt was very like desertion. Others thought the same; and, years after, one of Drake's enemies declared that 'contrary to his admiral's command he came away and left his said master in great extremity, whereupon he was forced to set at shore . . . 100 of his men to seek their adventures; which matter if it had been so followed against him (for he could no ways excuse it) might justly have procured' the visitation upon him of the extreme penalty. Drake's apologists have done their best to clear his memory of the charge, but without complete success. For four months he disappeared from view, and we do not know what happened before he arrived in Plymouth only nine days before Hawkins' return. The *William and John*, the third surviving ship, had parted from the

fleet before the hurricane that drove the rest to San Juan de Ulua. It did not reach Ireland till February 1569, after many hardships.

Thus of the six ships that had set out on the tragic voyage, but three returned, with only a fraction of the crews who had sailed in them. The losses of life and material were the most serious direct results of the disaster, for Hawkins probably managed to save the greater part of the treasure he had gathered, and he was able after he had recovered from his hardships to take up his business again on a large scale. But the direct results were not the most important effects of what had happened. The relations of Englishmen and Spaniards were never again the same, and the 'massacre' was an event of abiding importance in the history of the West Indies.



## CHAPTER VI

### FRANCIS DRAKE AND THE CORSAIRS, 1569-1573

THE news of the affair at San Juan de Ulua reached Europe at a moment when other events were demonstrating the end of all pretence at preserving the old relations of amity between England and Spain. The two powers were moving rapidly into bitter hostility, though fifteen years were to elapse before they were at open war. During those years the West Indies came to fill a foremost place in the minds of Englishmen, for there alone did it seem possible to achieve anything that might seriously weaken the overwhelming power of their Spanish enemy. In sapping the sources of his strength individual English sailors and their financial backers might hope to find wealth for themselves, and they were ready, therefore, to fit out ships at their own expense to ply the traditional English trade of commerce-raiding in the distant waters of the Caribbean. The first Englishman to shew the way to profit in the Indies was Francis Drake, and the fame of his exploits was so widespread in his own and subsequent ages that it has eclipsed the memory of the French corsairs who preceded him by forty years and has obscured the contribution of his contemporaries to the winning of the freedom of the Caribbean. The history of the West Indies between 1569 and 1596 seems in the traditional version to be nothing but the story of successive dashing

raids by one compelling hero, and in his glory we tend to lose sight of what was in reality of at least as great significance, the gradual but growing influx first of Englishmen and then of Dutch into illicit trade with the islands in such numbers that it was impossible to keep them out.

The causes that combined to bring about a change of era after 1569 were much more complex and deep-seated than is sometimes realised. In the first place, Hawkins and his associates did not abandon their attempts to make profit out of the illicit trade in negroes after the disaster that had befallen them at San Juan de Ulua. The traces that subsequent voyages of the same kind have left are extremely fragmentary, but we know that some were undertaken. The Portuguese authorities made repeated complaints of the seizure of negroes by English ships on the coasts of Guinea, and since the West Indies and Brazil were the only markets in which slave cargoes could be disposed of, it is clear that the traffic that Hawkins had begun was still being continued after 1569. In the winter of that year we hear of numbers of English ships sailing for Guinea to carry negroes to the Indies, and again in 1571 John Hawkins and William Winter despatched seven or eight ships on the same errand; but the story of those voyages has not been preserved, and we are reduced to conjecture that the Spanish colonists were still ready to brave all governmental prohibitions and to purchase the goods and slaves that were brought to them by these smugglers.

New and old competitors, too, were coming to join in the game. In the autumn of 1569 the first privateer squadron was equipped by Philip II's Dutch and Flemish rebels under the Seigneur de Dolhain as the nucleus of that force of 'Sea Beggars' which was to do

so much to destroy the maritime power of Spain. The scene of the depredations of the Sea Beggars who sailed with a commission from the Prince of Orange was in the narrow waters of the Channel, but isolated ships with mixed crews of Flemings, Dutchmen and Huguenot Frenchmen found their way farther afield to prey upon Spanish ships in the waters round the Azores and in the Caribbean. The Rochellois who were upholding the Huguenot cause against the King of France also sent many adventurers to join in the 'course', and it is to be doubted whether even at the height of the French wars there had ever been so many corsairs raiding in the Caribbean as were afloat there in 1572. Their depredations were so serious that Philip II, despite all his other preoccupations, was compelled to act.

The Spanish monarchs had so many problems to deal with in their unwieldy empire that it was impossible to pursue a consistent and efficient policy in regard to them all. The lesser difficulties were frequently neglected, and the West Indian islands had by the middle of the sixteenth century so shrunk in relative importance that their necessities for protection were usually overlooked. Only the safety of the treasure fleets could always claim attention, and in guarding this the Spaniards were consistently successful for more than eighty years. Though the capture of the treasure was the ambition of every corsair who sailed the sea, the system of convoy by armed galleons which was organised fully under Pero Menendez de Aviles in 1567 guarded them so efficiently that the longed-for prize always evaded capture until 1627, far on into the period of Spain's decline. The corsairs might hang around the skirts of the convoy and occasionally cut off a straying or disabled vessel, but the main body always got through safely and poured the

treasures of the Indies with more or less regularity into the royal coffers. Under Menendez it became customary to ship the bullion and pearls, not in the heavily laden and slow-sailing galleons, but in strongly armed and swift *gallizabras* of lesser size that could outsail their attackers and were not hampered with passengers.

But Menendez and his successors, among whom were some fine and capable leaders, could only rarely spare their attention from their main task and turn to clear out the freebooters who made local communications in the Caribbean so precarious. During their annual stay in the Indies the ships of the *armadas de la carrera* were from time to time employed upon police work against the corsairs, who scattered at once, for they could not venture to stand up to regular warships. But as soon as the *armadas* returned to their regular business of convoy, their enemies were back again like hornets and things were as bad as before. It was repeatedly represented to the King that no proper measure of security could be ensured for the commerce of the Caribbean until regular police squadrons of swift and well-armed ships were always kept on the station. In 1575 detailed proposals for the establishment of two such squadrons were put forward, the one with headquarters at Cartagena to police the waters off the coast of Tierra Ferme, the other based on Santo Domingo to protect the Greater Antilles and the Florida Strait. By 1582 something like this scheme was in operation, oared galleys being employed upon the service. The flotillas were known as *armadas de barlovento* or windward squadrons, and if they could have been kept up regularly they might have brought about a steady improvement of security; but the pressure of other demands prevented their proper refitting or their replace-

ment when damaged by storms, and consistent action proved too costly to be maintained.

Most of the corsairs who cruised in the Caribbean with occasional landings to water or careen their ships in the unoccupied islands did so rather aimlessly, with the hope of unprotected prizes coming their way. But no such aimlessness marked the efforts of Francis Drake, the boldest and most successful leader who ever spoiled the Spaniards in the West Indies. His later exploits as the second circumnavigator of the globe and as the great admiral of the Queen's navy must be studied in a general survey of the naval history of the period, but their fame never eclipsed the sensation caused by his first daring raids into the heart of the Caribbean. The traditional view depicts him as an unlicensed corsair who robbed and pillaged the Spaniards for his own profit, though in reality the motives for his actions lay deeper and are to be sought in the change of national policy after 1569 which caused Elizabeth and her ministers to use him to further their anti-Spanish designs. It is said that, after having suffered great loss owing to Spanish treachery in the affair at San Juan de Ulua and, 'finding no recompense could be recovered out of Spain by any of his means or by Her Majesty's letters of reprisal, he used such help as he might by . . . several voyages to the West Indies'. This is the version promulgated by his own family apologists; but it is far too simple, for it neither does justice to him as something more than a mere pirate nor credits him with being the first to conceive a strategic idea that was of perennial importance in all subsequent West Indian history. If Drake had wished to undertake general reprisals against the Spaniards for the losses he had suffered at San Juan de Ulua, it was

necessary to procure formal letters of reprisals from the Crown by a well-organised process, but this was never done. If he undertook to make private war upon Spaniards on his own account without such formal letters of reprisal, he would have placed himself in the position of an outlaw and a pirate. But this he certainly never was, for even according to the admission of his enemies he was always scrupulous in preserving the usages of war, and he kept strict discipline among his crews. The truth seems to be that his actions were always secretly approved by the English government, and that he was allowed, for the furtherance of national aims, to undertake the carrying out of an important strategical idea which was directly derived from the experience that Hawkins had gained in the three Indies voyages that he had undertaken with a different purpose.

The events of 1569 had clearly proved that it was impossible to secure a share in the trade of the New World by Spain's tolerance, but it might be possible to compel by force what she would not yield to persuasion. In November 1569 Hawkins was fitting out an armament of seven good men-of-war, and it was believed that these were destined for the Indies to rescue the men he had been compelled to abandon after San Juan de Ulua. But the Catholic rebellion of the northern earls brought imminent danger to England, for the Duke of Alba was assembling forces in the Netherlands to aid the insurgents and all the naval forces of the kingdom had to be mobilised and kept in readiness to guard against the threatened invasion. Hawkins' fleet could not be spared, but it was possible to send out a smaller force to reconnoitre and find a suitable base for later operations.

Early in 1570 Drake, with two small ships, the *Dragon*

and the *Swan*, furnished and equipped by the same group of capitalists as had been concerned with the Hawkins voyages, set sail for the Indies, while Hawkins himself was busied at Plymouth with the preparation of a fleet of six larger ships that the Spanish ambassador reported to his master were destined for the Rio del Oro near New Spain, where a settlement was to be established. This story was probably not far from the truth, and, if so, it is our first hint of the bold design that was being conceived by the adventurers and their backers. They were coming to realise that the treasure fleets were too strongly guarded to fall into the hands of any force they could send out. Ribault's disaster had shewn the danger of attempting to establish a base near the Florida Channel while the Spaniards were in strong force at Havana. It seemed hopeless to capture the whole of the annual treasure from Mexico and Peru at one swoop, but there might be a chance of seizing the half from Peru at the point where the Spaniards least expected attack.

The Peruvian silver that was pouring forth from the mines of Potosi in an ever-growing stream was brought in unarmed vessels through the South Sea to the city of Panama, and stored there until about the time when the arrival of the plate fleet at its first port of call, Cartagena, was announced. It was then laden on mule-back to be carried across the Isthmus to the small and squalid settlement of Nombre de Dios on the northern coast. The mule trains were guarded against the attacks of *cimarrones* and wild Indians who lurked in the dense forest that hemmed in the narrow and ill-kept bridle-path over the mountains. But the guards that were needed were never very strong and their vigilance was none too careful. Some part of the bullion and most

of the goods that were carried across the Isthmus were transported on mule-back only for some fifteen miles from Panama as far as Venta de Cruces at the head of navigation of the river Chagres, which flows into the Caribbean to the west of Nombre de Dios. There many of the mule-loads were stored until they could be sent down the river and along the coast in barges of shallow draught.

Information as to these arrangements was collected by Drake and his backers from various sources, but especially from one, Bayon, a famous Portuguese pilot who had been employed in the traffic and, having left the Spanish service, had come to London to dispose of his knowledge. In his voyage out with the slave-ships in the winter of 1569-70 Drake sailed across from the islands to the Isthmus, probably to gain information about the strength of the Spaniards there and the difficult navigation along the coast, but little information has come down to us about the voyage. Sufficient hides and silver were, however, obtained by trade in Jamaica and Tierra Ferme to give a good profit on the venture. This was an inducement to employ more of Hawkins' and Winter's ships in the trade in 1571, but Drake was more interested in his great design. He sailed by himself in the *Swan* with the exploration of the Isthmus coast as his direct object, and the capture of prizes off Cartagena as a means of making profit. Trade fell into the background and the new era of privateering war was beginning. A secret harbour, closely hidden near the track of the treasure frigates in their voyage to Nombre de Dios, was occupied for some time, and friendly relations were joined with the *cimarrones* and with the Darien Indians which were of very great importance to the adventurer's plans. He had now enough



knowledge to enable him to act, and he had fully shaped his bold design. This was nothing less than to attack the treasure just at the critical moment when it had been collected at Nombre de Dios to await the imminent arrival of the *flota*.

The general course of events came to aid him in carrying it out, for the last shred of pretence at amity between Spain and England was torn away by the revelation of Spain's treacherous share in the Ridolfi plot and by the Pope's bull absolving Queen Elizabeth's subjects from their allegiance. In January 1572 the Spanish ambassador was summarily expelled from England, and in May Drake was allowed to sail without direct governmental help but certainly with the friendly connivance of the authorities. His force was almost ludicrously small in comparison with the boldness of his design, for he had but seventy-three men and boys with him in two small ships, the *Pascha* and the *Swan*; but they were picked men, equipped in the best fashion of the time and clearly destined for fighting and not for trade, as Hawkins' three expeditions had been. A prosperous voyage of only twenty-five days carried them direct across to the still unsettled island of Dominica, and after watering there Drake sailed on unperceived by his enemies to his secret harbour on the Isthmus, only to find on reaching it that it had been betrayed, and that the Spaniards had removed the stores he had left there the year before. But he was not daunted, and in the last week of July he landed his men to build a small wooden stockade or fort in which to put together the shallow-draught pinnaces that he had brought with him in pieces. This was the first fortified post ever set up by Englishmen on the shores of the Caribbean, and though it was only temporary, it marked the definite entry of a

new fighting competitor into the struggle for the New World.

In a week the pinnaces were ready, and Drake moved along the coast with the greater part of his force and some other Englishmen who had joined him to attempt his surprise of the unsuspecting town. Unfortunately, he learned, the *cimarrones* had only six weeks before made an attack upon Nombre de Dios that had been very nearly successful, and the Spaniards, instead of being neglectful of defence as he had hoped, were thoroughly alarmed and had sent to ask for reinforcements from Panama against another attack by the maroons. With the calculated audacity for which he became famous Drake acted at once, and before the Spaniards could realise who their attackers were he had made himself master of the centre of the town. The King's treasure-house offered an extraordinary sight to the eyes of the amazed Englishmen with its enormous pile of silver ingots some seventy feet long awaiting transport to Spain. Marvellous tales of Spanish treasure were familiar to them, but here it was before their eyes and they could not take it by reason of its very bulk. Impressions such as these were extraordinarily arresting when Drake's men recounted them on their return home, and to them we may trace a good deal of the stay-at-home Englishman's belief in the enormous riches of Spain's Indies.

Audacity had mastered the town, but it was impossible for a mere handful of Englishmen with a wounded leader to hold it when daylight revealed their tiny numbers. With what booty of pearls and gold they had managed to pick up they retreated to hold an island in the bay until the Spaniards would offer terms, but they had been disappointed in their main hopes of

plunder, and the rainy season was coming on, when storms usually drove the corsairs home. But Drake was determined not to return without his prey, and a new and even more daring project was attracting him, which was nothing less than an alliance with the maroons for a land raid on the treasure trains.

But nothing could be done until after the season of storms, when the time of the visit of the *flota* was approaching, and this was five or six months off. For the first part of this time Drake employed his pinnaces in preying on the local coastwise traffic of Tierra Ferme between Cartagena and Curaçao, and we can judge from the accounts of his frequent prizes what a rich and busy traffic this was before the era of the new naval war had begun. There were many freebooters attempting to make profit by preying on this commerce, but though it is impossible to get a clear picture of what these obscure and nameless rovers were doing, we occasionally catch a glimpse of them when they meet with the better-known men whose narratives have come down to us. Drake came across both English captains who had served in Hawkins' expeditions and were now cruising for prize under various other owners, and French and Huguenot rovers who appealed for his help when they were short of provisions or munitions. There were various bargains to join forces and share plunder, and magazines of stores were laid in secret places and remote islands to afford opportunities for reprovisioning when needed. The prizes yielded a profusion of food-stuffs and well-built frigates to replace any boat that was damaged or worn out. Clearly the settlements on the coast of Tierra Ferme were getting prosperous, and it was no longer the wild no-man's-land that it had been in the days of Las Casas fifty years before. Its prosperity is a clear tribute

to Spanish powers of colonisation, and the colonists can hardly have been the incompetent and apathetic dullards that tradition has sometimes painted them. The abundance of valuable natural products other than gold and pearls that was transported made roving along the Spanish Main more profitable than off the less prosperous islands, and we can discern even as early as Drake's day the beginning of a regular business of West Indian privateering with well-equipped and disciplined crews who differed essentially from the mere bloodthirsty pirates of a later period.

To spend the months of waiting until the season of storms was over and the movement of treasure again began Drake withdrew to a secret hold on the wild and unsettled coast of the Gulf of Darien, and there he refitted his ships and matured his plans for further action. The first two or three months passed uneventfully, but the unhealthy climate began to take its toll of the little company, and for the first time Englishmen came to know the dangers of tropical disease. A deadly epidemic that was probably yellow fever carried off one of Drake's younger brothers and several other men, and what had at first been a welcome interval of rest, became more and more irksome. For the details of the rest of the heroic story reference must be made to the pages of Hakluyt or the graphic narrative of Sir Julian Corbett, where all the available evidence is collected.<sup>1</sup>

By the beginning of 1573 only between thirty and forty were left of the seventy-three men who had sailed with him, and on 3 February Drake set off with eighteen of them on perhaps the most daring enterprise in all his adventurous career. During his months of inactivity he had made the wild maroons his firm friends, and

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Corbett, *Drake and the Tudor Navy*, vol. i, chaps. v and vi.

they and the Indians of Darien henceforward looked to Englishmen as their allies against their hated Spanish oppressors, a feeling that William Dampier found active more than 100 years later. Nor did England soon forget the ties of friendship that Drake knitted. Until the whole situation in the Caribbean had radically changed, our statesmen always thought of Darien and its friendly natives as a likely place for attack on Spain's power.

Guided by thirty maroons, Drake and his eighteen men stole along the jungle trails until they reached a hill whence, the guides told them, two seas could be seen at once. There, climbing a high tree, Drake, first of all Englishmen, looked out over the Pacific and vowed that he would sail it in an English ship. Panama was spread out beneath him with the treasure ships from Peru lying in its harbour, but he knew that with his tiny handful of men he could do nothing against it. The alarm was already raised and there was nothing for it but retreat, for the Panama garrison would soon be in pursuit. The only practicable way back to the sea lay through Venta de Cruces, where the store-houses, in which the goods to be transhipped down the Chagres were kept, were nightly guarded against maroon raids. However, once more a bold surprise effected what a direct attack could not, and in a very short while the settlement was in Drake's hands. But the booty again was disappointing. The stores held no treasure, and the inhabitants' possessions yielded poor spoil, so Drake determined on another try elsewhere.

There was for a time a cessation of the mule trains, and the interval before they started again was employed in the capture of victuals for the homeward voyage and picking up what spoils there might be in the coasting frigates. A large privateer manned by French Hugue-

nots was found in distress and relieved, and the two companies agreed to join forces in a fresh landing-party. The whole coast was by now thoroughly aroused and on guard, but again Drake, aided by the forest craft of his native allies, was able to attack where least expected. He pounced upon a convoy just before it delivered its loads under the guns of *Nombre de Dios*, and this time his luck held. The surprise was complete, and three very rich mule trains fell into his hands with very little resistance. To use the customary phrase of the privateers, the voyage was 'made' even beyond the wildest hopes of its leader. Gold and pearls were crammed into men's pockets and haversacks until they could hardly walk, and fifteen tons of silver had to be left and hastily buried in the hope of recovering it later. Even when the bargained equal division with the Frenchmen was complete, there was enough left to make everyone a rich man for life.

A fortnight later the homeward voyage began. Two of the captured frigates that had been newly built according to the designs evolved by Menendez to outsail the rovers were chosen for their speed and sea-worthiness and they were loaded deep with plunder. That the Admiral had succeeded in his plans for improving Spanish shipbuilding in the colonies is proved by the swiftness of Drake's homeward passage across the Atlantic. Giving a wide berth to the frequented waters round the Azores, the two frigates steered a direct course from the Florida Channel to Scilly. In the twenty-three days from land to land not a sail was sighted, and on Sunday morning, 9 August 1573, nearly fifteen months after he had sailed away from England, Drake brought the congregation flocking out from Plymouth Church to welcome him. The value of

the booty he had brought back was an extraordinary revelation to the average Englishman of the wealth of the Indies, and popular rumour, as usual, exaggerated it to fantastic proportions.

The cumulative effect of the events of four momentous years since Hawkins' disastrous return had convinced the popular mind of Spain's treacherous enmity to all that Englishmen held dear. Menendez's destruction of Ribault's Huguenots, the treacherous repudiation of the agreement at San Juan de Ulua, Alva's 'bath of blood' in the Netherlands, and last of all the Massacre of St. Bartholomew in Paris, were piled on one another as irrefutable evidence of Spain's cruelty and her unscrupulous resolve to enslave the world. But Drake's miraculous exploits with but a handful of men seemed to point to her weakness and incapacity to defend her colonial riches. It looked as though the monstrous Spanish Empire had an Achilles' heel in the West Indies and that Drake had found it. The popular view was, of course, far from seeing the truth of what was in reality an infinitely complex situation, but the undue simplification produced an overwhelming effect on national opinion and with lasting results. Elizabeth and some of her shrewd ministers knew better, but it served their policy of active defence to have an enthusiastic nation behind them, and the popular story was a first-rate help to anti-Spanish propaganda. Henceforward the West Indian legend was an important buttress of English Protestant fervour and it was never forgotten. Rarely has a popular feeling played so large a part in shaping so long a series of political events, and it has been worth tracing its genesis at some length because the legend became an essential factor in subsequent West Indian history.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PRIVATEERING WAR, 1573-1590

TO recount the development of events in the naval warfare of thirty years between 1573 and 1604 would be beyond our theme, for it was primarily worked out in the waters of Europe. The Caribbean was only a 'side-show' as far as organised national efforts were concerned. The course of events in the West Indies was governed far more by what was happening in Europe than by local circumstances, and the story therefore seems to lose continuity and be concerned only with a few outstanding episodes. To some extent that is true, and we can only deal with West Indian enterprises that were organised on a considerable scale or were really national efforts, but we must not forget that all the while commerce-raiding and illicit trade with the Spanish colonies for private profit were continuing. To the privateers the West Indian waters were a perennially attractive 'Tom Tiddler's ground', but it is impossible to trace the ill-recorded stories of their voyages and their obscure alternations of good and evil fortune. Few or none of his successors made profits that even approached the rewards of Drake's first audacious raid, though over a long period of years it is probable that they made an appreciable contribution towards England's rise to wealth. Undoubtedly privateering afforded a training-ground of experience and seamanship that was of vital importance to the rise of England as a maritime power,



and the provision of a reserve of fine sea-going ships and hard-fighting seamen such as she had never had before. The West Indies, therefore, played an essential part in the founding of our maritime greatness long before we had a single foothold in the islands or the rise of our colonial power had begun.

The traditional story leaves an impression of the almost unchequered success of English bravery against Spanish apathy and cowardice, but this is merely an illustration of the persistent influence of patriotic propaganda upon the verdict of history. In reality the truth was that Spain was attempting the impossible when she claimed that the Caribbean was *mare clausum* like the Adriatic and denied access to its unoccupied shores to all other nations. But to neglect or despise the efforts she made in the heyday of her power to protect her claims is indefensible and leads to a misunderstanding of the events of the time. It was Pero Menendez, the greatest of Spanish naval leaders, who first saw the essential truth that the sea is one, and that the vital point of defence of the West Indies lay, not in the Caribbean itself, but at the mouth of the English Channel and off Ushant. He had done more than all others to improve the defences in the islands, to police the waters that surrounded them with fast-sailing and well-armed frigates, and to improve the Indian Guard of the treasure fleets. But this was not enough; he realised that the growing danger of the English rovers who were attempting to follow where Drake had led could not be effectively checked by merely local measures. They must be summarily dealt with near their base, and in 1573 Menendez presented to Philip II a minute embodying the essentials of a scheme with something of real strategical genius. He proposed to seize and hold the Scilly

Islands as a base for a permanent squadron of fifteen or twenty heavily armed and weatherly vessels of moderate size to cruise regularly off the mouth of the Channel and to prevent any force of corsairs, whether English, Huguenot or Dutch, from getting out into the Atlantic. There were other points of the scheme that bore upon the general political situation, but its interest to us lies in the fact that it was designed by a leader who had won his reputation in the West Indies, and their defence was an essential purpose of the plan. That it came to nothing despite Philip's acceptance and the preparation of a great force to carry it out was due to a sudden blow of fate. In September 1574, when Menendez' preparations were almost complete, a terrible epidemic broke out in his fleet, and before he could get to sea the great admiral fell a victim. With him the scheme perished, and the initiative at sea passed from Spain to the sailors of Elizabeth.

The old plan of Coligny to establish an advanced base in American waters was now included, upon Grenville's prompting, among the schemes that Secretary Walsingham and the war party in Elizabeth's Council were planning to force on open hostilities against Spain; but Burghley and the Queen were not ready for a challenge that they knew their forces were insufficient to maintain. Single rovers might be allowed to make what profits they could in the Caribbean without imperilling national interests, but it was too early to attempt to establish a foothold in Darien or the islands and nothing was done.

It was not until 1584, when the period of private reprisals was rapidly passing into that of open war, that Drake was allowed to take up again the sequel to his raid of ten years before and to attempt upon a great

scale to 'impeach the King of Spain in his Indies'. He was now a leader among the Queen's naval advisers, and the reputation he had won by his exploits in the South Sea and his voyage of circumnavigation stood very high with the Council and in the nation. Some months of irresolution passed between the first consideration of the scheme and the final decision to launch it, but at last in July 1585, when Philip's seizure of English ships in Spanish ports had raised the national anger to breaking-point, Drake's final commission was signed and he was placed in command of a fleet of twenty-eight of the best private men-of-war and two vessels of the Royal Navy for a raid upon the West Indies on a scale that had never before been attempted. Though it was to serve a national purpose the expedition was fitted out at their own expense to make profit for its promoters, and differed only in scale, therefore, from the ordinary privateering ventures; but it was extraordinarily popular, and merchants and ship-owners alike hastened to subscribe.

But the Queen could not be persuaded to make up her mind to let Drake sail, and for weeks he was kept dawdling at Plymouth without the necessary permission. In the midst of this delay, however, news came to hand that shewed the weakness and lack of defence of the Spanish islands against a serious force.

Ralph Lane and Richard Grenville had been sent out at the expense of Sir Walter Raleigh early in the year 1585 to found his new colony of Virginia, and on their way thither they were ordered to reconnoitre the position in the Antilles. They landed and entrenched themselves for some time on the unoccupied coasts of Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo in turn, and by enquiry of the colonists and the local officials they gleaned

such evidence of their defenceless condition that the reports they sent to England were sufficient at last to end the government's indecision and gain for Drake his long-awaited orders. Before they could be revoked, he acted without a moment's delay, and on 14 September 1585 the vessels left Plymouth Sound to begin their celebrated 'Indies voyage'.

To the Spaniards Drake pretended that his purpose was only to enquire into the causes of the embargo on English trade that had stranded so many of our merchants helpless in Spanish ports; but this was but a flimsy excuse, as his actions in plundering Vigo and making use by force of its harbour to complete the equipping of his ships clearly proved. Philip and his admirals were certain that the fleet was destined for an attack upon the Indies, and the presence of materials for fortification on board the ships convinced them that the design was to establish a permanent English base in the islands. But they had no fleet ready to prevent the raiders from proceeding on their voyage with complete impunity, and this illustrates the decay of Spain's naval power since Menendez' disastrous death. Santa Cruz, the principal Spanish admiral, was hopelessly involved in attempting to carry out his master's orders to prepare a great *armada* for the invasion of England, and the dearth of naval stores and skilled seamen was such that everything was in a terrible state of unreadiness and disorganisation. Nothing could be done to stop him, and Drake sailed away from Vigo at the end of October with contemptuous indifference for his enemies and a rise in the self-confidence of his men that boded ill for the colonies he was aiming to attack.

His design was no mere raid for plunder but a serious attack in force, first upon Santo Domingo and the

fortified Spanish ports on the coast of Tierra Ferme, then a land attack upon Nombre de Dios and Panama in concert with the maroons, and finally the capture of Havana, which he planned to seize and hold with a permanent English garrison. This ambitious plan was for an operation of war on the grand scale, and if it succeeded it would dry up the supply of Spain's treasure at its source, break up the whole system of her supplies, and give results of profound importance on the whole international situation. It was the boldest scheme that Englishmen had ever yet attempted at sea, and even its conception proves how the West Indies had come to play a part of supreme importance in maritime strategy. That its main strategical purposes proved impossible of accomplishment with a force of 2300 men in twenty-one ships and eight pinnaces should not blind us to the vigour of the plan and to its grasp of the problem. What Hawkins and Drake first conceived other English leaders attempted in later centuries with ampler means but no greater success, and we must wait to discuss the essential causes of this till a later chapter.

Drake was prevented by stress of weather from making any attack on the Canaries, and he passed on to sack and burn the town of Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands which was the centre of organisation of the Portuguese slave-trade in Guinea. This second easily won success raised high the confidence of all for the trans-Atlantic voyage, but a few days after they had left the Cape Verde Islands a terrifying epidemic of some unknown disease raged through the ships and carried off nearly 300 men within a week, a forewarning of the truth painfully learned by so many later tropical expeditions that disease is the enemy's best ally.

The first landfall in the West Indies was made in Dominica, and there and in St. Christopher the expedition watered and refitted during the Christmas season while they prepared to attack Española. Both islands were found uninhabited save by a few savage Caribs, who were ready to barter tobacco for a few trinkets, an indication of the neglect of the Lesser Antilles by the Spaniards. The city of Santo Domingo, which was Drake's first object, was not only still the greatest city in the islands but it was so strong and populous that it had never been seriously attacked during the French wars, and to capture it must give a resounding blow to Spanish prestige. The city had lost a good deal of its early commercial importance, but it was still the centre of government for all the islands and Tierra Ferme, and was only surpassed in population and importance by two or three cities in Spain itself. In Santo Domingo were the mother church of the Indies, the principal headquarters of the religious orders, the superior courts of law, and the chief offices of the government, all established in fine stone buildings with beautiful gardens and an ordered life such as was to be found nowhere else in the colonies save in the cities of Mexico and Lima. To attack it was clearly a very serious undertaking, but again Drake's audacity surmounted every obstacle. The aid of the maroons from the inner fastnesses of the island was enlisted, and on New Year's Day 1586 a sudden and secret landing was made at a place some ten miles from the city, where it was possible to find a passage through the surf of the coastal reefs. When all the landing party had been put safe ashore, the fleet moved on to challenge the castle guarding the port, and the Spaniards mistook this for the main attack. The garrison of trained soldiers was small, but

the citizens put up what resistance they could. It was of no avail, for they fell into Drake's trap, and while they were drawn up to oppose a landing before the castle, they were attacked from the rear and driven in disorder into the city. The Englishmen followed them through the open gates before they could rally, and forced their way through to the *plaza* or central square of the town. There they entrenched themselves behind barricades. The garrison evacuated the castle without firing a shot, and before New Year's Day was over the city was at Drake's mercy. Its plunder was disappointing, for none of the expected stores of gold and silver could be found to loot. The island mines had been abandoned for many years, and the treasure ships from the mainland no longer came to Española, so that the only hope of profit was to be found in the private spoils of the inhabitants and in forcing the authorities to pay ransom for the city. A whole month was taken up by tedious negotiations until at last Drake had to force the governor to come to terms by systematically destroying the finest houses and buildings. Even then he had to content himself with 25,000 ducats, which was much less than he had expected to secure, but the blow to the prosperity of the city was irreparable. The churches and monasteries, the government offices and law courts were gutted and left bare, the artillery and stores of the fortifications were loaded aboard the ships and the galleys of the island guard were destroyed. The Spanish Indies had never before suffered such a humiliating disaster, and, when the English fleet put off to sea again on 1 February, the prestige of King Philip had sunk immeasurably in the eyes of his colonial subjects.

From Santo Domingo Drake steered for Margarita where he hoped to secure much plunder from the pearl

fishers, but tempestuous weather prevented him from approaching his objective and he had to turn eastward to Rio de la Hacha and Cartagena. The first was an unimportant settlement that did not keep him long, but the second was the commercial capital of the Spanish Main, a town about one-third of the size of Santo Domingo but much richer, for there were collected the annual treasure of gold, silver and pearls to be loaded in the *flota*, besides valuable cargoes of cacao and cochineal that the settlements of Tierra Ferme were now producing in considerable quantity. The prize would be rich, but it was well defended, for the position of Cartagena is naturally strong, and it was skilfully fortified and held a numerous garrison. The city was not a virgin position like Santo Domingo, for it had been held to ransom by Jacques de Sores some forty years before, when it was very much less important and less strongly fortified; but there was no possibility of a surprise, for the Spaniards knew of what had been happening in Española and were thoroughly on the alert. The general of the guard-ships of the coast of Tierra Ferme, Don Pedro Vicque Manrique, had his headquarters in the harbour and was a skilful leader of high reputation and experience, so that Drake was matched against an opponent well worthy of his steel.

In none of the operations of his adventurous career did he exhibit finer qualities of generalship than upon this occasion. By an admirably designed feint he led the Spaniards to believe that he was attempting to repeat his tactics at Santo Domingo, when in reality his plan was quite different. While part of the fleet was ordered to make a demonstration against the principal entrance to the harbour so as to attract the attention of the garrison, Drake himself piloted the remaining vessels



through an extremely dangerous second entrance and landed his best soldiers through the surf in the rear of the defences. Some very hard and costly fighting followed, but at length the Englishmen forced their way into the town as far as the *plaza*, where they entrenched themselves as they had done at Santo Domingo. Despite all the Spaniards could do, they could not be expelled, and at length the garrison had to evacuate even the castle, and the whole city and harbour were at the English mercy. Once more the hopes of vast booty were disappointed, for at the first warning of Drake's approach the governor had sent the non-combatants and the city's store of treasure into the hills of the interior. Their losses in the hard fighting and a renewed outbreak of the dreaded disease that had before attacked them had greatly reduced the English force and had carried off some of the best officers. There were now only 700 or 800 fit men available, and this led to decisions of great consequence.

In Drake's original design he had purposed holding Cartagena as a permanent English stronghold in the heart of the Indies, but he had now reluctantly to abandon the plan as impossible; first, because his numbers were too much reduced to provide a garrison, and second, because he could see no means of furnishing reliefs. It is true, as Sir William Monson, the contemporary writer on strategy and himself a capable sailor, wrote, that a powerfully held English base at Cartagena on the flank of the treasure route would be a standing menace to the essential communications of the Spanish Empire; but it was none the less true that it would in a very short time have had to be maintained against an overwhelming force, and Drake realised that the means at his disposal were too small to face the risk. England

was, in fact, not yet strong enough to maintain distant garrisons, and even two centuries later it took all her available force for Lord Heathfield to maintain our hold on Gibraltar. Thus the best chance of accomplishing a design that had been in the minds of Spain's enemies ever since Coligny's day had to be put aside.

Since the prize could not be held, the best course was to get back home with the largest booty possible, and it was determined to make the city pay heavily for its release. However, though he proceeded as he had done at Santo Domingo to destroy the buildings of Cartagena piecemeal, Drake could extract from the Spaniards only a quarter of what he had originally demanded. Six weeks were taken over the tedious negotiations, and disease was beginning to make serious inroads into his forces when he finally agreed to accept 112,000 ducats in full discharge of the ransom. However, this was not an unsatisfactory haul, and finally the landing parties were re-embarked and the English fleet sailed, leaving the devastated city to its inhabitants.

An attack upon Panama was considered but had to be abandoned, for even with the aid of maroon auxiliaries it was clear that the risk to be run was too great. The course was set for the Cayman Islands and Cape Antonio at the western end of Cuba and there, until nearly the end of May, Drake stayed refitting and refreshing his invalids while he looked out for the *flota* on its return voyage to Spain. But the weather was very adverse and tempestuous, Havana was far too strong to attack and the treasure fleet slipped through unseen. This was a last disappointment of Drake's hopes, and it was only partially compensated by the revenge of destroying the new Spanish settlement that was being fortified at St. Augustine in Florida, near the spot where

Menendez had overwhelmed Ribault nearly twenty years before. Raleigh's Virginia colonists under Ralph Lane were picked up at Roanoke after leaving the Florida Channel, and in the middle of June 1586 the course was finally set for home. Many of the original aims had been left unaccomplished, but the whole 'Indies voyage' had been a triumphant success. Besides a booty in treasure of at least £300,000 or £400,000 in value in modern money, some 240 pieces of heavy ordnance were brought home as ballast to make a very material addition to England's artillery.

But the material gains were small compared to the damage done to Spanish prestige. The moral effect on public opinion throughout Europe was incalculable. The apparently overwhelming might of the invincible Catholic power had received a resounding check, and the drooping spirits of Philip's revolted Netherlanders were nerved to increased vigour in the struggle which at Antwerp, only a few months before, Parma and his veterans seemed to be rapidly bringing to a victorious end. The exclusive empire that claimed the sole right to colonise as its monopoly had been flouted with impunity in the very heart of its New World dominions, and Philip's pretensions to dominate the Ocean appeared ludicrous when he proved utterly unable to thwart or even check Drake's triumphant progress. For a whole year or more Spain's naval preparations against England had been the talk of Europe, and all the result seemed to be a disaster to her colonies that brought her to the verge of bankruptcy. Such in brief were the most significant results of the first organised West Indian expedition on the great scale.

By 1586 the Ocean sea and the lands beyond it had clearly come to play a part in world politics; the old

narrowly European age was widening out and the maritime era had begun. Henceforth the West Indies were one of the first theatres of international rivalry, though ten years elapsed before there was another great Caribbean expedition. The naval war was fought in the Narrow Seas and the struggle against the Invincible Armada strained all the energies of the English admirals. Commerce destruction in the Caribbean was left to the privateers, and though upon occasion their concerted efforts were upon a considerable scale and made serious drains upon the resources of the enemy, they have left little mark in history. The most prominent privateering owner was Sir John Watts, a citizen of London, who carried on the business on a wholesale scale and sometimes sent forth powerful squadrons that made great profits. In the early 'nineties his ships almost closed the channel between Yucatan and Cuba to every Spanish vessel but the well-guarded *flotas*, and though the corsairs were never able to effect their capture they hung round their skirts and again and again cut off ships that strayed from the convoys and made some very valuable captures. Twice at least serious proposals were made to the Queen for expeditions against the still unconquered city of Panama, but none of them came to anything.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LATER YEARS OF THE ELIZABETHAN WAR, 1590-1603

AFTER the failure of his great expedition against Lisbon in 1589 Drake was left unemployed and in disgrace for six years. Other captains had neither sufficient influence at Court nor prestige with the City financiers to accomplish the organisation of such a powerful and expensive force as any enterprise against the Isthmus clearly demanded. At this time there was a radical change in the situation in the West Indies that had momentous consequences. Contrary to a traditional story that has been too attractive to the romantic novelist, the Spanish leaders were neither weaklings nor cowards. They had been sadly hampered in dealing with the problem of the defence of the Indies by the numberless difficulties facing them in Europe and by the cumbrousness of their administrative machinery. But the dangers that now threatened the breakdown of all ordered life in the Indies brought about some relaxation of innate Castilian conservatism and the devotion of skill and energy to problems of colonial defence along new and more satisfactory lines. As we noted in discussing the 'Indies Voyage', some excellent frigates were being constructed in colonial yards, and Spanish ship-building saw a remarkable renaissance that made the treasure fleets and their convoys after 1590 much more homogeneous and compact than the ill-assorted

collections of cumbrous, slow-sailing galleons of earlier years. The whole system was tightened up and skilfully improved by some excellent leaders who had profited by English lessons of seamanship. Fast-sailing *avisos* or packet-boats were regularly despatched across the Atlantic and kept the authorities in the West Indies informed of what was going on in Europe, so that there was much less opportunity of their being surprised by an unexpected attack. Large funds were devoted to the fortification of the essential points of the defensive system like Havana, and some of the best military engineers of the time were employed to design and equip new forts. At each important point well-equipped guardships were stationed to deal with attacks by single privateers, and painful experience had taught the colonial authorities how best to deal with raiders. The evil had, in fact, gone far to produce its own antidote, and as the 'nineties wore on West Indian privateering became less and less profitable and more dangerous. In earlier years profitable cruises might be expected, save for some mischance, but now luck played a great part. One captain might pick up a treasure frigate and be made for life, while his consort did not cover the expenses of his voyage, and a third ended his days in a Spanish dungeon. And more than this, the colonies had become capable of defending themselves even against a strongly organised expedition, as was proved by the misfortunes of Drake and Hawkins' last tragic voyage.

Chafing against the inaction of unemployment, Drake had ever since 1593 been contemplating a private expedition to the Indies. He was the only leader who had conquered Santo Domingo and Cartagena, the two leading cities of the Caribbean, and now he itched to take the third, the virgin city of Panama on which he

had looked down twenty years before. His preparations had not proceeded far when the government decided to undertake a more active prosecution of the naval war, and by 1595 Drake was again restored to favour and entrusted with the preparation of a new expedition upon a large scale. Volunteers flocked to join him, for the prospect of following the most fortunate of English leaders to the spoil of the Indies was extraordinarily popular. But disquieting delays impeded the preparations, and a terrible Spanish raid that devastated the south of Cornwall and the news of preparations for the invasion of Ireland indicated that the Englishmen would not have everything their own way. However, at last in August 1595 the ships were permitted to sail. Sir John Hawkins had been joined with Drake in the command, and Sir Thomas Baskerville was in charge of the 2500 soldiers embarked to undertake the land operations that the attack upon Panama would need. The expedition was thus of the amphibious sort that was so frequent in the West Indian campaigns of the eighteenth century. Even before sailing there were difficulties arising from the divided command, but Baskerville was able to act as conciliator and to persuade Hawkins to accept Drake's wish to make the Canaries the first objective. The result, however, was far different from the easy success that had been won at Santiago ten years before. Behind their new fortifications the Spaniards were forewarned and well prepared, and the English landing party was beaten off with heavy loss. When it was clear that there was no hope of success, the fleet sailed away across the Atlantic with sadly diminished confidence. Before they had left England it had been learned that one of Philip's treasure-ships, with two and a half millions of Mexican bullion aboard, had

taken refuge in a disabled condition in the harbour of Puerto Rico, and Drake determined to surprise and capture it before proceeding to his main objective at Panama. But luck was adverse, for while his ships were watering at Guadeloupe at the end of October, the Spanish frigates that had been despatched to retrieve the treasure, captured one of the English stragglers and learned what was being planned. They lost no time in warning the governor of Puerto Rico, who had already heard from the Canaries, and all hope of a surprise was at an end. However, Drake was still resolved to try, and by a feat of fine seamanship he forsook the usual route and piloted his ships through the difficult shoals of the Virgin Islands to arrive unexpectedly off Puerto Rico, but only to find the Spaniards ready and determined to put up a strong defence. The result was a startling and unwelcome indication of the way in which circumstances in the Indies had changed. Hawkins had been ailing on the voyage across the Atlantic, and on 12 November, as the fleet caught sight of the goal and before it cast anchor, his end came and the first Englishman who had made his name known in the Indies passed away—an ill omen for the success of the enterprise.

The well-designed new fortifications of Puerto Rico were manned by 1500 fresh and alert trained troops under a skilful leader, Don Pedro Tello, who had brought the relieving frigates from Spain. They were, perhaps, as difficult an object to capture as could be found in the Indies, and despite all Drake's ingenious audacity they proved too strong for him. In the face of fierce artillery fire from every fort, that did great damage to the English ships, it was impossible to force an entrance into the port, and to land and enter on a regular siege was clearly too hazardous a risk to undertake, so



that finally it was resolved to abandon the attempt and to pass on to the main purpose at Panama. In the middle of December Rio de la Hacha was captured and burned, but, though some pearls and treasure were taken, the governor obstinately refused to pay any ransom; and when the next settlement, Santa Marta, was reached it was found absolutely empty of anything of value, for the citizens had been forewarned and had removed all their possessions into the interior. Cartagena was left aside as too strong to attack and the fleet steered on for Nombre de Dios. A small fort was the only defence there and this was soon captured, but to little effect. In the course of the reorganisation of the system of communications the Spaniards had decided to abandon the old and very unhealthy port in favour of the better and more easily defensible harbour of Puerto Bello some twenty miles to the west, and when Drake appeared the transfer had been begun, so that neither settlement contained much of value. As soon as Nombre de Dios was occupied, a landing force of 750 picked men under Baskerville was despatched in the direction of Panama. Unfortunately the route chosen proved wholly impracticable, partly by reason of its natural difficulties and the torrential rains that drenched the soldiers and their ammunition, but mainly because the Spaniards were found in strong force behind unscaleable obstacles, and in assaults upon them the Englishmen suffered severe losses. Nothing was possible but retreat, and four days after he had set out Baskerville brought the remnant of his men back to Nombre de Dios with the disheartening news that all hopes of reaching Panama were at an end.

Not merely had the expedition failed in its main object, but it was even doubtful whether it could ever

get back safe to England; for Pero Menendez Marquez, the son of the famous admiral and himself a first-rate leader, was in command at Havana with a numerous fleet, and strong reinforcements from Spain were on the way. For the first time Drake seems to have lost heart, and though he proposed to turn his attack towards the river of Nicaragua and Truxillo, it is to be doubted whether even he believed in the possibility of success for such a forlorn attempt. However, tempest and disease decided. The ships had to put in to refit upon the wild coast of Veragua and there the fever-laden air took its toll. Men began to die by scores from dysentery and malaria, and towards the end of January 1596 the admiral himself was stricken down. For twenty-eight years since he had carried the *Judith* from under the Spanish guns at San Juan de Ulua his name had spelled good fortune, but now it was all over. The weapons of sea-power that he above all others had forged, had proved to be no more than others always infallible.

When his body had been cast to the waters not far from the scenes of his earliest success, the command devolved upon Sir Thomas Baskerville, and it was to the tactics that Drake had invented that the remnants of his last fleet had to trust to fight their way out of the Caribbean. Believing that the strong fleet that had come out from Spain in pursuit of them was lying in wait in the Yucatan Channel, Baskerville tried to work his way back eastward on the course by which they had entered. In the teeth of the prevailing winds this was always difficult, and it now proved impossible. In a heavy gale one of the large Queen's ships and three others were forced to part company, and Baskerville, with the fourteen or fifteen sail that alone remained of the original twenty-seven, had to steer for Cape

Antonio and trust to getting through the Florida Channel unobserved. But he ran almost direct into touch with the Spanish ships that were awaiting him, and there resulted what was perhaps the first regular naval action between rival squadrons in West Indian waters. Neither side was able to overcome the other, but each claimed the advantage. The Englishmen succeeded in getting out through the Florida Channel without further serious loss and to complete their voyage home; but the Spaniards could claim that they had won the strategical victory, for the Caribbean was cleared of the invaders and their colonies were relieved of any further threat by an organised force for some years. All the great naval leaders who had learned their experience in West Indian raids had gone. Their lesser imitators were still active as privateering captains, and some of them carried out vigorous individual enterprises with single ships or small groups raiding in concert. But the remaining major operations of the war were fought in European waters and do not concern us.

By the beginning of 1598 Henry of Navarre had at last succeeded in bringing the long civil wars in France to an end, and, firmly seated on the throne of a reunited but militarily exhausted nation, he was determined upon peace. In April 1598 France signed the Treaty of Vervins with Spain, and this left England with only her Dutch allies to carry on the war. They confined their efforts in the West Indies to a little privateering, but mainly to the pushing of their contraband trade with the Spanish colonists and the Indians, and they were not prepared to undertake any operations of war on a large scale. This was left to a private Englishman, and Cumberland's raid upon Puerto Rico was the last great raid of the war.

George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, had been more prominent than any other English nobleman as a leader of corsairs; since 1587 he had organised and fitted out at his own expense no less than eleven expeditions against Spanish commerce that had met with varying success, and this was his twelfth and last. His original intention was to attack Brazil, and in the winter of 1597-98 he assembled a fleet of eighteen sail with a force of over 1000 soldiers aboard, besides seamen. He first tried to intercept the Portuguese carracks sailing for the East Indies, but when in fear of him they abandoned the voyage and remained in the Tagus, he resolved to change his objective and to raid the West Indies instead, while he was unexpected. At the end of April 1598 he made his dash across the Atlantic, and three weeks later he landed his men without warning on the coast of Puerto Rico some twelve miles east of the port of San Juan, whence Drake had been repulsed three years before. This time the Spaniards were much less prepared, but the natural difficulties of the position were so great that the first attack on the outlying forts was thrown back to the ships, but a second night landing was more successful. While the forts were bombarded from the sea, the English pinnaces crept behind them through the narrow channels leading into the lagoon that guarded the city on its landward side, and before dawn the Spaniards evacuated their outer defences, which were now taken from the rear. To the surprise of the Englishmen, as they advanced upon the town through thick woods they were unopposed, and when at last they came into the open they found that it too had been abandoned, and that every Spaniard capable of bearing arms had retired into the strong castle of El Morro at the extreme western end.

Cumberland was now determined to hold the place as a permanent English foothold in the Indies which had been Drake's original plan, and since the governor would not listen to overtures for surrender and it was certain that a direct assault would reduce his force below what was essential for a garrison, he had perforce to commence a siege. In ten days his breaching batteries were ready, and so fierce and well directed was their fire that in a few hours the governor was compelled to sue for terms. Cumberland would grant the Spaniards nothing but their lives, but they could resist no longer, and at last on 19 June 1598 he was master of the whole fortress. He had succeeded where Drake had failed in 1595, but the odds against him were nothing like so great, for then the garrison had been prepared and reinforced by Tello's fresh men from Spain. However, the capture was a very fine feat of arms, for Puerto Rico was a fine town with a considerable commerce in the products of the island,—sugar, hides and ginger, but no gold, for the original mines of Ponce de Leon's day had not been worked for more than sixty years.

Before the end of July it became evident that the design for holding the town permanently must be abandoned, for disease had broken out among the troops and raged with such violence that hundreds perished. Cumberland could get no ransom from the authorities, and the only hope of getting enough booty to make a profit on the voyage lay in capturing the Mexican *flota* that was due to sail in August. Dividing his force, therefore, he left his prize to its returning inhabitants and sailed away for the Azores. But the news of Cumberland's presence at Puerto Rico had caused the *flota* to be stayed at Havana, and he could make no further

captures of importance. The total booty did not amount to more than 400,000 crowns and hardly paid the expenses of the expedition; but the capture of one of their strongest fortresses had caused serious consternation in Spain, and it undoubtedly hastened the end of King Philip, who first heard the news early in September, long after Cumberland had been compelled to relinquish such a citadel in the Indies as all his enemies since Coligny had hoped to establish, and such as every Spaniard dreaded. Three days after the disastrous tidings reached him he died, realising at last to the full that whatever else might befall, the puny England that in his earlier years he had despised had beaten him, and that to her was passing the mastery of those Indian seas where at his accession he had been supreme.

Five more years of war were to pass before the old Queen followed her enemy to the grave, but they saw no great events in the West Indies and little change in the situation there. The most powerful and progressive section of English merchants earnestly longed for peace in order to restore the old, secure, legitimate trade with Spain and Portugal, for they rightly saw that there was no possibility of adding permanently to the national wealth by the merely destructive activities of the privateers. But to the sailors and the ambitious younger courtiers such ideas of peace were despicable, as savouring of the counting-house and casting aside all opportunity of winning fresh wealth and glory by exploits like those which under their great Queen had raised England from impotence to fame. In reality such dreams of profitable war-making were incapable of accomplishment, though they were to delude Englishmen for two more generations. The wealth of the Spanish Indies was not as easily won as fancy promised, and the later years

of the struggle had proved by a long series of almost unredeemed failures that England's strength was insufficient to drive home a mortal blow against the enemy.

When Elizabeth's death brought the King of Scotland to the throne, it was almost with relief that the soberer elements in the nation knew that peace was at last at hand. But it came in an unexpected fashion, for James, with a pedantic insistence upon legal fictions, maintained that since wars were affairs between rival sovereigns and he in Scotland had never been at war with the King of Spain, therefore the state of hostility automatically ceased with his accession. Nothing remained but to arrange the terms of a new treaty for the regulation of peaceful relations between Spain and Great Britain. Such theoretical ideas made no appeal to the nation at large, but the actual fact of peace was eagerly welcomed. However, James found great difficulty in bringing the activities of the privateers to an end, though any attack upon the Spaniards was now proclaimed as piracy. After much fruitless discussion in which Spain would neither acknowledge the rights of other nations to sail in American waters nor England relinquish her demand for freedom to trade in the Indies, the Treaty of London was signed in August 1604, and Spain and England returned to a state of peace after nearly twenty years of open war and more than thirty since ordinary relations of amity had prevailed. To judge merely by the words of the written agreement, the result of those thirty years in the Indies was absolutely nil, for apparently there was only a return to the exact state of affairs existing before John Hawkins began his attempts to secure a share of the commerce of the New World. One of his arguments in

support of his schemes had appealed to ancient treaties as authorising trade in the Indies just as they admittedly covered the English merchants in Seville or Antwerp. Now, forty years later, the English apologists for the treaty used the same contention. They asserted that the American trade was included under the right to 'free commerce between the King of Spain and the . . . King of England and the . . . subjects of each of them both by land and sea . . . in all and singular their kingdoms, dominions, islands, other lands, cities, towns, ports and straits where commerce existed . . . according to the use and observance of the ancient alliances and treaties' (*Treaty of London*, 1604, Art. 9). But in reality there was a vital difference between such an argument in the early years of Elizabeth and in the reign of her successor, the universally accepted sovereign of a united kingdom.

In the 1560's it seemed almost an impertinence for weak and puny England to challenge Spanish claims to exclusive maritime monopoly beyond the Ocean, but forty years later those claims looked merely ridiculous to the eyes of every nation but Spain, and this was the change that Elizabeth's sailors had brought about. It was not in the Indies themselves that the victory had been won; the privateering war, whatever its advocates thought, had failed, for it had neither destroyed Spanish commerce nor captured her treasure fleets or colonies. It was the successful maritime defence of England in her own waters, and the diplomatic and financial assistance that Elizabeth had devoted to the encouragement of every enemy of Spain on land, that had exhausted the Colossus. Insurmountable obstacles had been raised up in the path of Spanish ambition and claims to exclusive monopoly not only by the efforts of English and Dutch sailors in the Narrow Seas and the Caribbean,



but also by the battles and sieges in the Netherlands and the long campaigns through which Henry IV fought his way to the throne of a united France. The struggle was all one despite its many theatres, and the truth appeared in this, the first world war, as it has done in every other till the latest, that the fate of the West Indies, as of every distant prize, was decided not at the circumference but by the outcome at the centre—on the battlefields of Europe and in the waters that wash her shores. Just as in the Old World the onward progress of Spain was arrested and she could never more aspire to regain the predominant position she had held at the beginning of Philip II's reign, so in the New. Her European power was not destroyed but curbed so that other and rival nations might thrive, and so with her colonies. Hers still remained as immensely the greatest of colonial empires, but its limits were set. Henceforward, though she retained what she had occupied, she could acquire no more colonies, and the waste spaces of the world remained for the energies of her rivals who had begun their rise to greatness in the hard school of defence of their liberties, of religious faith, and even of national existence, against her bigotry and ambition.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE PEACE AND AFTER, 1604-1625

FOR a moment the broader aspects of history have diverted us to a wider stage, and we must now return to some detailed consideration of the part played by the question of the Indies in the long-protracted negotiations that step by step brought the world war to an end. There was no single series of peace negotiations as there was at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, at Utrecht in 1713, at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and at Versailles in 1919. The enemies of Spain retired from the struggle one by one—France at Vervins in 1598, England in 1604, and the Dutch not until 1609. Even then there was only an uneasy truce and the struggle was renewed twelve years later to be continued for twenty-seven more years until the final settlement. But in each of the separate negotiations the Indies and their trade were among the principal matters in debate, and had much influence over the character of whatever agreement was reached.

From the middle of the sixteenth century onwards when extra-European questions first appeared in international politics, it was the contention of Spain and Portugal, as we have seen, that prior discovery gave an indefeasible right to the possession of territories overseas. They claimed that the waters that bounded them were *mare clausum* like the Adriatic, which was then generally regarded in international law as subjected to

the domination of Venice. These contentions their rivals denied, and in the course of the wranglings the new maritime nations came with more or less consistency to maintain that only effective occupation could confer valid possessory rights or rights to control the sea. In the negotiations for peace that closed her wars with Charles V France had repeatedly contested Spanish claims to monopoly in the Indies, but she never persisted, for her preoccupations in Europe always persuaded her to waive her contention to secure some more immediate advantage. In the negotiations for the definitive peace of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559 the Spanish envoys based their claim to a monopoly of the western navigation on the Papal bulls of Alexander VI and on the fact that Spain alone had borne the labour and expense of discovery. But the French would not consent to the exclusion of their sailors from any ports that were not effectively occupied, and finally the whole question of the Indies navigation was omitted from the treaty. Merely an oral agreement was reached reiterating the traditional custom that corsairs who went to the Indies did so at their own risk, and would be dealt with as pirates without compromising the peaceful relations between the nations. Thus it was accepted that there was 'no peace beyond the line', *i.e.* the 'lines of amity', or the prime meridian passing through the Azores and the Tropic of Cancer. Whatever might be happening in Europe, violence done by either side to the other beyond those limits should not be regarded as a breach of the treaties, and ships captured beyond the lines were counted good prize.

These negotiations of 1559 seem to have set a fashion, for in all the subsequent diplomacy of the sixteenth century this was the kind of argument the Spaniards

adopted. If they could not secure a formal admission of their claims in a treaty, they preferred that the whole question of the Indies navigation should be ignored. Henry IV would not include a renunciatory clause in the Treaty of Vervins (1598), and it is therefore silent as to the Indies.

To the English and Dutch, however, maritime and commercial affairs were of far greater moment than they were to France, and in the peace conditions of both the Indies navigation was put forward prominently. Each tried to get Spain to acknowledge formally their right to navigate and colonise in the New World. But all such efforts were met by flat refusal, and it was upon this point that the negotiations always broke down. The Spaniards were, in fact, more strongly determined upon their exclusive policy as the struggle went on. In Philip II's cession of the Netherlands to his daughter Isabella and her husband, the Archduke Albert of Austria, (May 1598), he stipulated that their inhabitants should not carry on in any way commerce or traffic with the East or West Indies nor send any ships thither under pain of confiscation and death. But the Dutch were deriving almost all their newly won wealth from their maritime trade, and to consent to such an exclusion would destroy the sources of their prosperity. This clause more than any other made the reunion of the Netherlands for which Philip had planned the cession quite impossible, and retaliatory measures were taken that were of important and lasting effect.

We noted in an earlier chapter that though trade in the Indies was nominally restricted to Castilians, in practice this restriction was not enforced and any of the King of Spain's subjects was employed. The retail distribution of American goods in Europe being carried

on from Antwerp and Amsterdam, it was Flemish and Dutch ships that in the middle of the sixteenth century brought them thither from Seville, and factors and sailors from the Netherlands found many opportunities of employment with the American trading houses, in fact along with Germans, Italians and Portuguese they probably outnumbered the Spaniards. In 1584, in order to compel his rebellious subjects to submission, Philip II forbade all Spanish commerce to the Netherlands, and seized all their ships in his ports. The States-General replied in 1586 by a renewal of their own stringent prohibitions of all commerce with their enemies, and the merchants saw themselves faced with ruin or driven to evade the prohibitions. It is from about 1586 onwards, therefore, that we find Dutch and Flemish ships beginning to come in increasing numbers in search of indigenous American products in the West Indian islands in exchange for European manufactures. The prohibitions of Philip II were not rigidly enforced for long, and regular commerce between Holland and Spain was frequent in the 'nineties; but in 1598, after the rejection of the offer of reconciliation and the accession of Philip III, the refusal of commercial intercourse was complete, and this drove out the Dutch merchants to find new trades in the outer seas as the English were doing. Their greatest efforts were, of course, made in the East Indies and led to the foundation of the English and Dutch East India Companies. But great efforts were also made upon the trade of the West Indies and especially upon the coast of *Tierra Ferme*.

An essential need of Dutch industry was salt for the curing of the herrings that their fishing fleets took in the North Sea and exported to all parts of Europe. This salt was obtained from the Portuguese salt-pans

between Lisbon and Setubal until 1598, when the enforcement of the prohibition brought the trade to an end. The salt-ships then began to resort in great numbers annually to the newly discovered salt-mines of the coast of Venezuela and especially to Punta Araya, where the deposits were worked with negro slaves and loaded direct into the ships. This traffic brought the Dutch traders in large numbers into contact with the Indians of the interior and also into the slave-trade on the coast of Guinea. They rapidly outdistanced the English and French in the illicit trade in both fields, and between 1593 when their first Guinea expedition began and 1609 they had come into the foremost place in the attack upon the Spanish monopoly of the West Indies trade and the African slave-trade, for they could undersell all their competitors and supply the colonists with European goods and slaves at very low prices. Their trade in tobacco, for instance, became so great as to lower the price of the commodity very seriously in Northern Europe, and the Spanish government was driven by 1607 to the suicidal policy of prohibiting the raising of tobacco by their colonists in *Tierra Ferme*, with momentous results. The illicit trade was entirely unorganised and carried on by individual merchants from Zeeland and Holland, but it brought great profits to their ports and raised the Dutch to a position of almost unchallengeable supremacy in the supply of American products to the markets of Europe.

The rise of this Dutch trade had important results both in the West Indies and upon the peace negotiations, for it made the United Provinces the most insistent demanders of the inclusion in any treaty with Spain of provisions for freedom of trade with America. In the negotiations with England from 1598 onwards

for a new Anglo-Dutch alliance against the common enemy, the States-General put the Indies question in the forefront; and they did their best to persuade both France and England to join with them in sending out new offensive expeditions against the West Indies, so that the failure of James I to insist upon the demand for Spain's acknowledgement of free trade was a serious disappointment. His instructions to the negotiators of the Treaty of London (1604) included directions to press for the satisfaction of England's right to share in the opening up of the outer world, and they pointed out a compromise according to the practical doctrine of international law that she had maintained. While 'to avoid all inconveniencies that peradventure happen in places so remote [as the Indies], where the subjects of other princes shall fall in company with one another where their laws and discipline cannot be so well executed, we', says King James, 'are contented to prohibit all repair of our subjects to any places where [the Spaniards or Portuguese] are planted, but only to seek their traffic by their own discoveries in other places whereof there are so infinite dimensions of vast and great territories [in which they] have no interest'. That is to say, the test of possession shall be effective occupation and what is not so occupied is free to the trade of all. There is no mention of colonisation but solely of trade, for England had not as yet seriously entered the ranks of colonising powers. But the compromise was flatly refused by the Spaniards, who insisted that the English should be excluded from every part of the Indies expressly or by clear implication, or that the King should declare in writing that they would trade there at their own peril. The English plenipotentiaries declined to consent to either demand, and the negotiations would have broken

down as they had done in 1601 if either side had put its interest in the Indies in the forefront of its requirements. But since neither did this and both were prepared to risk difficulties far afield in order to attain peace at the centre, the ambiguous course was taken of excluding all mention of the Indies from the treaty and thus the face of each sovereign was saved.

The defection of their allies left the Dutch to bear the whole burden of the war alone, but it only spurred them on to fresh exertions. By 1604 they had fully established their profitable commerce with the East Indies at the expense of Portugal on such sound foundations that they knew they could not be driven out. But the great new Dutch East India Company only harmed Portuguese interests, and Spain cared much less about these than she did about preserving her monopoly in her own possessions in the West Indies, and it was a serious threat to establish a similar powerful West India Company that finally brought Spain to treat for peace. The promoter of the idea was Willem Usselincx, who proposed not only to organise Dutch trade in the New World but also to found new colonies there at Spain's expense. Attempts were made to enlist the help of France in the scheme, but without success, for Henry IV looked rather to gaining a share of the East Indies trade, where the Dutch were not willing to welcome his competition.

The threat was regarded with such alarm that Philip III consented to enter into negotiations in 1607 on the disadvantageous basis of possession,—so far had Spain declined from her former greatness. The Indies question caused by far the greatest difficulty to the negotiators and demanded months of discussion before the conference finally broke down on the inflexible but



impossible demand of Spain that the Dutch should retire from both the West and the East Indies. She would not accept any treaty such as she had concluded with France and England where the Indies were unmentioned, but insisted on an express renunciation, and peace was thus clearly unattainable. For several months the negotiations were at a standstill, but at length early in 1609, on French and English mediation, they were renewed and directed to the lesser aim of forming a truce for nine years. Again the Indies trade was the stumbling-block, but Spain was finally induced to accept an involved clause that did not mention the Indies, but with many circumlocutions recognised the right to trade that the Dutch had successfully wrested from the Portuguese in the East Indies, while refusing any power to enter the parts of the West Indies in the effective possession of the King of Spain. The truce between the parties was to last for twelve years, and thus a breathing-space was given to the United Provinces to consolidate their hardly won position among the great powers.

In each of the three agreements, therefore, Spain had been compelled tacitly to accept the contention that effective occupation could alone give a right to territory beyond the sea, and this was henceforward to be one of the basic principles of international law. Thus the waste spaces of the New World lay open for colonisation, and both England and France began their colonising work in North America without serious Spanish interference. But in the West Indies matters went on much as before. The Dutch continued and much extended their illicit trade with the Spanish colonists, and English and French sailors continued their raids on Spanish commerce though at their own peril and as pirates, not

privateers provided with regular governmental commissions. The age of naval war was, in fact, passing into the era of the buccaneers. The efforts of the English and French governments to curb the piratical enterprises of their subjects met with little success, but the gradual decline in the prosperity of Spain's island colonies made piracy in the West Indies less profitable. The pirates were crueller and more brutal than the privateers, but they were not so strong or so well organised, and for a time the settlements had comparative peace. The eastern end of Española, Puerto Rico, Jamaica and parts of Cuba continued to be the seats of agricultural communities of Spaniards raising natural products, especially cattle, sugar, ginger and cochineal, which they largely sold to Dutch traders, but the rest of the West Indian islands were unoccupied by Europeans and remained the homes of primitive Carib savages.

This neglect of the Lesser Antilles was due to a combination of causes. The Spaniards knew them all from the earliest days of discovery and the names that were then given to them are those by which they have continued to be known. But they afforded no prospect of gold- and silver-mines as did the Greater Antilles, and the Caribs who lived in the dense forests that covered most of them to the water's edge were much fiercer and more intractable than the natives of the larger islands. The approach to the islands from the Atlantic before the prevailing north-east trade wind was easy, but to sail back to them from the centres of Spanish power farther west was very difficult. Their wooded character made them unsuitable for cattle-raising, which was the essential industry of the early Spanish colonists, and since their staple natural products could be procured more easily in the forests of the larger islands, they

afforded nothing to export. It was, thus, not until new colonists from other nations came in search of unoccupied lands on which they could begin planting that the Lesser Antilles emerged from their obscurity and a new era began.





## CHAPTER X

### THE FIRST SETTLEMENTS IN THE LESSER ANTILLES, 1605-1625

WHEN the new maritime nations, England, France and the Dutch, first engaged in enterprises beyond the ocean their essential object was the search for profitable trade, and especially to find new routes to the great markets of Asia. The establishment of colonies to receive their surplus population was hardly considered but by a few theorists, and, save for ill-founded hopes of imitating the Spaniards and securing supplies of the precious metals, it was the idea of Eastern commerce alone that moved the promoters. Thus the foundation of the first permanent English colony in Virginia in 1607 was largely promoted with the aim of finding a route through the continent of North America to the great water that the Indians told of as lying to the west. Similar motives promoted the establishment of Samuel de Champlain's colony of Canada on the river St. Lawrence, which was said to lead to the rich land of Saguenay and to the great water beyond. But as the hopes of finding a strait through the continent faded just at the time when peace had brought the chances of profit by privateering to an end, the minds of the unemployed adventurers and their financial supporters were turned instead to the possibility of planting commodities that would bring good prices on the markets of Europe, and especially

tobacco, the demand for which was growing at a rapid rate.

The plan of raising better tobacco upon plantations worked by white labour than could be procured from the natives seems to have occurred at much the same time to men of all the three nations who were roaming the waters of the Caribbean in search of profit in the early years of the seventeenth century. We find fragmentary mention of small parties of both English, French and Dutch planting tobacco in the river lands of the Wild Coast of Guiana from the middle of the first decade of the seventeenth century onwards, and as it was directly from these obscure enterprises that the first colonies in the Lesser Antilles took their rise, we must say something about them.

The familiar adventures of Sir Walter Raleigh in Guiana had a continental and not an island aim, the search for the fabulous region of Manoa with its gilded king, *El Dorado*, in the interior wilds of South America, and they need not detain us. But they had an indirect influence on Caribbean history, for they familiarised English sailors with the navigation along the Wild Coast between the mouths of the Orinoco and the Amazon which the Spaniards had rarely visited and never occupied. When the expeditions came to a disastrous end, a few English stragglers were left behind among the Indian tribes, and some survived to come into contact with later adventurers. But the motive of the first English colony in Guiana, that of Captain Charles Leigh on the Wiapoco or Oyapok river in 1604, seems to have sprung from a desire to share in the trade with the Indians that the Dutch were now cultivating so profitably. Leigh had made a previous unsuccessful attempt to found a colony on the St. Lawrence, and in 1602 he

had traded along the Guiana coast and selected the Wiapoco river as suitable both for trade with the natives and to search for gold-mines. To these aims he later added the design of planting flax, cotton and sugar-canes, and he was financed for a small expedition by his brother, Sir Oliph Leigh, who had probably been engaged earlier in promoting privateering enterprises. The details of the story are not in themselves important, but they give hints of what was happening in a critical period of West Indian history that is extraordinarily obscure. The changes were being brought about not by the men of a single nation or by any organised effort, but by the cumulative effect of the actions of obscure and individual Dutchmen, French and English whose voyages have hardly left any trace in the records. It is almost as though after the turn of the century unnumbered swarms of unknown little men suddenly thronged on to a stage from which the great actors had passed. But obscure though the period is, it saw the beginnings of vital movements, and we must catch at any hints we can get to trace their first stirrings.

Charles Leigh's company of forty-six men was a very small one with which to begin a new venture, but, small as it was, from the first it suffered from dissensions, and the relief sent out to Guiana in 1605 failed to reach them. Their plans for beginning planting must have been generally known, for a Dutch vessel carrying negroes from Africa to work in the salt-mines at Punta Araya put in at the Wiapoco in the hope of disposing of some labourers to Leigh, a hint of the part the Hollanders were now beginning to play in the slave-trade. However, the leader had died of fever, the colonists were reduced to thirty-five men who were anxious to get away to go roving, and in May 1605 fourteen of



them went off with the Dutchmen to the salt-works. Immediately afterwards a Frenchman from St. Malo, who had been trading in the adjacent river, the Cayenne, came in and took away another ten men.

This was no mere chance, for the French were at this time far more interested in Guiana than the English. In 1602 Henry IV had granted to René de Montbarrota commission to colonise Guiana as his lieutenant-general, and in 1604 his deputy, Daniel de La Ravardière, sailed to the delta of the Amazon, the Wiapoco and the Cayenne to make preliminary search for a suitable site for a colony. It was not, however, until 1607 that they seriously began with three ships and 400 men to attempt to occupy the region, and then it was rather for the purpose of planting tobacco than to undertake the search for El Dorado, which had been the first objective of La Ravardière. This first French colony in Cayenne was destroyed by the attacks of the Caribs, and their succeeding attempts were made farther south in the Amazon delta, near the island of Maranhão, where they were trespassing on the territory of the Portuguese.

The first attempt at tobacco-planting by Englishmen seems to have been made by the last remaining ten men of Leigh's company, who began raising flax and tobacco to provide goods with which to pay for their passage home. They only stayed for one season, however, and in 1606 they returned safely in a Dutch trading-ship with an English master which picked them up in the Wiapoco. The relief expedition that had been sent out in 1605 was more unfortunate, for, as was stated above, it never succeeded in reaching its goal in Guiana, and when provisions ran short, the leader of the sixty-seven emigrants on board had to consent to run for one of the

Windward Islands in the hope of getting food-supplies from the Indians. They managed to reach St. Lucia and entered into friendly relations with the Caribs. But dissensions arose between the sailors and their passengers, and after a short stay the ship sailed away leaving them behind to begin planting. They were therefore the first Englishmen to attempt a colony in the West Indian islands, but their fate was a tragic one. Within a very short time after the departure of the vessel the friendly mask of the Caribs was thrown aside and a savage attack was launched upon the unfortunate colonists, and all but nineteen of the sixty-seven men who had landed were slain in the fighting that lasted several days. Of the nineteen who escaped to the Spanish settlements only four ever saw England again.

The second attempt to found an English colony in Guiana was much more definite in its aim than was Leigh's ill-fated enterprise. Robert Harcourt, its promoter, seems to have been associated with certain Dutch merchants who were interested in the South American trade, and he proposed to establish a trading factory on one of the Guiana rivers and to begin planting on the surrounding lands with native labour under the direction of English colonists. The expedition sailed in 1609 and the site chosen for the colony was again upon the Wiapoco, but after four years of effort upon a small scale and with inadequate resources the colony petered out, and by 1613 there was no Englishman left upon its site. In 1614 the Dutch attempted to begin a plantation nearby as the French had done on the Cayenne in the previous year, but neither attempt succeeded, and it was not until 1616 that Captain Groenewegen was able to establish a permanent footing on the banks of the Essequibo with a mixed force of Englishmen and Zee-

landers, and the Dutch occupation of Guiana began its long course.

Harcourt's ill success did not dissuade him from continuing his efforts and he attempted to secure more support by the foundation of a joint-stock company for Guiana in 1613, but he failed to secure subscriptions and English planting enterprise languished for the next six years. There are fragmentary indications from Spanish sources that English and Dutch were raising tobacco round the mouth of the Orinoco and on the coast of Trinidad, and undoubtedly a large quantity of tobacco was being brought to England and the Netherlands from those regions. When the Virginia tobacco trade began to become important after 1613, the English were compelled by governmental prohibitions to relinquish the trade in Spanish tobacco and it fell more and more completely into Dutch hands. But certain projectors, and especially Roger North, who had been with Raleigh in Guiana in his disastrous expedition of 1617-18, believed that tobacco grown in an English colony might share in the preference given to Virginia tobacco, and with this as one of their aims they founded a new company to establish plantations in the Amazon delta and secured a royal patent to carry out their plans. But English politics were then in a particularly difficult crisis over King James's policy for the marriage of Prince Charles with a Spanish princess. There were rival pro- and anti-Spanish parties at Court, and as the one or the other held the ascendancy so colonising enterprises on territory claimed by Spain were blessed or condemned. We need not trace the fluctuations in the fortunes of North's Amazon Company, but merely note that in May 1620, when North was on his way out to begin his colony with settlers who had had earlier experience in

planting tobacco with Harcourt, the patent of the company and all commissions issued under it were revoked by James under the dominating influence of the Spanish ambassador, Count Gondomar, and the promoters were peremptorily ordered to desist from further attempts to trespass on occupied Spanish territory.

Not merely were the Spaniards extremely active in bringing diplomatic pressure to bear upon the vacillating King to force him to prohibit, under severe penalties, all further English enterprise in Guiana; orders were issued to the Portuguese authorities in Brazil to expel the intruders by force, and the situation became too dangerous to expect any enterprise in Guiana to be pursued with the hope of success. This was of great importance in the history of English enterprise in the Caribbean, for it was from the failure of North's schemes that our first West Indian colony sprang. But before we consider its genesis we must say something of the radical change in the international situation that made it possible.

The uneasy Twelve Years' Truce between Spain and the United Provinces was nearing its end when North's Guiana schemes were the battle-ground of rival English factions. Later ages have seen that by 1620 Spain had passed irretrievably on to the downward slope of national decay, but the inordinate pride and ambition of her rulers made them blind to the unmistakable signs of decline; they were unyielding in their refusal to abandon any of their grandiose pretensions. When in 1621 Philip III died and power passed into the hands of his dissolute son and his headstrong favourite Olivares, they revived in its most exaggerated form the policy of domination in which with all his resources Philip II had so disastrously failed. Every intruder was

to be thrust out from the Indies and Spain was to be the exclusive mistress of the new world of America. At the moment everything seemed opportune for the revival of her most extensive claims. England was submissively anxious for peace to further the marriage of Prince Charles with the Infanta; France was again the prey of faction and another civil war; while in Germany the armies of the Counter-Reformation were carrying all before them in the first stage of the terrible war that was to last for thirty years. Only the Dutch were certain to fight to the last for the trade to the Indies and like the Spaniards they were determined neither to extend the truce nor to think of peace.

Though on land their armies could hardly hold their lines of defence, the Dutch had risen from poverty to riches and a place among the foremost powers by the war at sea, and now they were resolved to do all they could to bleed their enemy to death. Extraordinary success and profit had rewarded the efforts of their highly organised Company in the East Indies, and the new leaders of the nation strove to repeat that success in the West Indies and to make the Spanish colonies the object of a sustained attack in force upon a scale such as they had never suffered before. Thus at last Willem Usselincx found the chance of founding a West India Company upon the grand scale that he had been seeking for years. But unfortunately neither those holding authority in the Republic nor the merchants and ship-owners who were expected to find the capital for the new Company could realise the radical differences between the West and the East Indies as spheres of action. The States-General favoured the design as enabling them to concentrate the public resources on the land war while the Company was expected to finance and

carry on a maritime war in which it was to make its profits at the expense of Spain. The idea was not essentially Dutch, for it was shared both in France and England and was based upon a radical misconception of the lessons of the Elizabethan war. Usselinckx himself alone seems to have had greater insight and to have realised that in the Indies of the West, unlike the East, permanent and material profits could only be secured by the establishment of colonies of Europeans raising agricultural products either by their own labours or those of imported negro slaves.

That the slave-trade must furnish an important field for the activities of the West India Company was recognised by the inclusion of the west coast of Africa in the area over which the Company was given monopoly rights against all Dutch citizens, but those rights were regarded with great disfavour by the merchants and ship-owners who had built up their great illicit trade in the West Indies and the Spanish colonies by their individual efforts and at their own expense, and were not ready to withdraw before the Company's monopoly.

The charter of the West India Company was granted on 3 June 1621, but subscriptions were difficult to obtain though they were sought far beyond the limits of the United Provinces. Attempts were made to obtain subscriptions in France and the projects of the Company were widely advertised there with important after-results, though not in the direction intended by the promoters. Efforts were also made to interest the Danes, for Christian IV was known to be ambitious to extend Danish commerce and had for some years been attempting to found a Danish East India Company. The States now endeavoured to persuade him to direct his efforts to the West Indies so as to guard

their monopoly in the East. A treaty of alliance was concluded late in 1621, but it resulted in nothing, for King Christian's resources were fully absorbed in his ambitious schemes in Germany and he could never proceed with his designs in the Indies. It was not until towards the end of 1623 that the subscription lists of the Dutch West India Company were closed, and although a million florins were advanced from the national coffers the total only amounted to just over seven millions, a capital disproportionately small compared with the vast design of the Company. Rival directions were discussed for the first great organised expedition, but it was finally decided to leave the Caribbean for a time to the individual privateers and traders who were acting there and to concentrate effort against the rich but comparatively ill-defended Portuguese settlements in Brazil. A powerful fleet of twenty-seven vessels with 1600 sailors and 1700 trained soldiers on board was sent forth in December 1623 under the command of Jacob Willekens of Amsterdam as admiral and Pieter Pieterszoon Hein (the celebrated Piet Hein) of Rotterdam as his vice-admiral, and the rich capital of the Portuguese colony, San Salvador on the Bay of All Saints (Bahia), was given them as their objective. Before the end of May 1624 they had achieved its capture, and a rich booty fell into their hands. The news caused the utmost consternation in Madrid and Lisbon, for it was the first time that a part of the Iberian possessions on the mainland of America had been conquered and held in force. The story of the conquest and its disastrous loss by the Dutch after only a few months' occupation (April 1625) only concerns us because of its consequences farther north. The whole of the maritime strength that Spain and Portugal could

jointly put forth was assembled under the command of Don Fadrique de Toledo, their best naval leader. It was one of the strongest and best-equipped expeditions that had ever been despatched from the Peninsula, and when the news of its success came home it was greeted with exuberant pride and enthusiasm. Its preparation had strained every resource and the disasters that overtook the ships on their return after their victory at Bahia were irreparable. Terrible storms destroyed many of the ships that had been sent out, while Dutch cruisers captured others, and when Don Fadrique got back to Spain at the end of the year (1625), it was with but a fragment of the fine force with which he had set out.

To equip his fleet the American waters had been denuded of ships, guns and trained men, and in the long run their loss caused infinitely greater and more lasting results. For 130 years none but Spain had held permanent settlements in the circle of the Caribbean islands, but the very year of Toledo's victory at Bahia and his subsequent misfortunes saw the end of her monopoly in the Antilles and the beginning of the enduring settlements of others who could defy expulsion and transform the islets that she had despised and neglected into producers of rich commodities and the homes of a teeming population. Amid the greater happenings of the time the beginnings of the English and French plantations were almost unnoticed, but in them lay the germs of the future of the West Indies and their problems. They will command the main share of our attention in our next chapter, but since they arose from what took place during the Twelve Years' Truce, it is fitting to trace here the beginnings of their story down to 1625, when war again became general.

When Count Gondomar had persuaded or forced



James I to bow to Spanish claims and withdraw the charter of Roger North's Company which was attempting to found English plantations and trading stations in the delta of the Amazon, British subjects were forbidden to engage in colonising schemes in Guiana and the leaders of the project were threatened with imprisonment. The planting of tobacco on the Wild Coast was therefore impossible for Englishmen who wished to retain their allegiance, and those who persisted had to take service under the Dutch or go elsewhere. There was additional danger threatening the settlements at the mouth of the Amazon, for the Portuguese from Para were known to be preparing to expel them by force, and in such precarious conditions profitable enterprise was impracticable. Among those who had gone out to Guiana with Captain North in 1620 was one Thomas Warner, a man of good Suffolk family but no fortune, who had been attracted by the possibilities of profit that tobacco-planting afforded. When the Company was dissolved, Warner saw no further prospect of success on the Amazon and determined to seek for a quieter planting-ground elsewhere. In 1622 he set sail with a few companions to explore the Carib islands of the Lesser Antilles, and he finally decided that the island of St. Christopher would suit his purpose best, for it was farthest removed from the ways frequented by the Spaniards and less likely to suffer interference than Guiana had been. During his first stay in the island Warner raised an experimental crop of tobacco to test the qualities of the soil, and in 1623 returned to England to seek a merchant backer who would furnish him with supplies while he was developing his plantation, and would in return take future crops and market them to their mutual advantage. Such a method

of financing West Indian enterprises, whether of privateering or trade, was the regular practice, and the Dutch adventurers of the lesser sort had been applying it to planting schemes with English partners for several years. There was nothing unusual, therefore, in Warner's search, and he soon secured the support of a small merchant syndicate and in January 1624 returned with additional recruits to commence his work in St. Christopher on a substantial scale. This date may be taken as the beginning of the first permanent settlement of others than Spaniards in the West Indies. Warner's first crop of tobacco was destroyed in one of the frequent island hurricanes, but later there was better success, and in March 1625 Captain John Jeafferson was despatched to London in the *Hopewell* with a full cargo of St. Christopher tobacco which was pronounced to be of good quality and fetched remunerative prices.

The date at which Warner began his enterprise was due to no isolated chance, but was merely the first English manifestation of the rising movement towards planting that was stirring among the adventurers of all the maritime nations. When the Dutch captured Bahia, there was a rush by the ship-owning firms to seek advantage and new opportunities of profit in the trade of Brazil. Among those who sent out ships was the wealthy Anglo-Dutch firm of Courteen Brothers of London and Middelburg, who had had many connections with the illicit trade with the American colonists during the Truce. At one time they had chartered ships to the Spanish government in the salt-trade and some of their employees had many acquaintances among the Spanish colonists on the Main and in the islands. Private ties such as these between Dutchmen and English and of both with certain Spaniards do much to

account for the community of movement in West Indian history in the first half of the seventeenth century that is so noticeable a feature of the time.

On the return voyage from Brazil one of the Courteens' ships touched at the beautiful but uninhabited island of Barbados lying to the east or windward of the chain of the Lesser Antilles. Its commander, John Powell, knew one Groenewegen, a Dutchman who had been in the Spanish service and possibly with some help from the Courteens was now trying to make a plantation upon the river Essequibo in Guiana. There he was troubled by the hostility of the Spanish officials in Trinidad, and the idea seems to have come to Powell that his planting efforts might be transferred to Barbados, which was far removed from the Spaniards and, lying to windward as it did, was difficult of access to them. Freedom from interference would undoubtedly be a factor of importance in promoting the success of a new planting enterprise, but the island had another attraction. The forests that then covered it almost to the water's edge were rich in dye-woods and their produce might afford additional opportunities for profit.

With the exception of sugar, no single commodity has played a greater part in Caribbean history than logwood, though its prime importance was not to come until later in the century. 'Brasil' wood was the generic name applied in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the wood of various tropical trees which yield a rich red dye; it had been one of the first valuable exports from the New World and there was a regular trade in the commodity throughout the sixteenth century, especially to the Low Countries where it was largely used for dyeing cloth and entered into the composition of most black dyes. But for long the dyers could not find a way

to make the colour fast, and for this reason the use of 'logwood', as the English called it, was prohibited in England, and it could only be introduced under licence. But soon after 1600 the secret of fast-dyeing with logwood was discovered in the Netherlands, and in the next twenty years its use very rapidly extended and remunerative prices could be obtained on the European markets for cargoes of the various woods included under the name. It was in this trade that Powell saw additional opportunities of profit from the plantation of Barbados.

Landing in the island early in 1625, he took formal possession of it in the name of King James I of England, and after a few days' stay proceeded on his voyage to carry the news of his discovery to Sir William Courteen. Unfortunately on his way through the Caribbees he touched at the island of St. Christopher, where Warner and his colonists were now firmly established. His men incautiously described the beauties and advantages of the new island, and this had unfortunate consequences that will appear later. The scheme for colonising Barbados was warmly taken up by the Courteens, and John Powell's brother, Henry, was sent out with eighty colonists to begin the work. They landed in February 1627 and were followed in May by another ninety, after which immigrants came thick and fast, so that by 1629 there were between 1600 and 1800 people in the island, and they had throughout been entirely free from Spanish interference. Most useful help was received from Groenewegen and his Indians in Guiana, and the first produce of the plantations was partly sent to England in the returning emigrant ships or sold to various Dutch traders who touched at the island.

Meanwhile things were moving fast in St. Christopher and a new competitor was entering on the scene. In the

sixteenth century the French were in the forefront in Caribbean privateering, but later they fell behind. However, individual French merchants and their captains, especially from Dieppe and from the Huguenot port of La Rochelle, continued to set forth corsairs although their gains were small as compared with those of the Dutch. They also took some part in the attempts to open up planting and trade on the coast of Guiana and most directed their efforts to the region afterwards known as Cayenne. But the French never succeeded in winning the friendship of the Indian tribes as the Dutch did. About 1624 some Frenchmen under the leadership of a Lyonnais, Captain Chantail, failed in their attempt to establish themselves in Cayenne and had to flee from Indian attacks. They managed to escape to the island of St. Christopher, and there in 1625 they were found dispersed among the natives by other Frenchmen who were seeking a safe harbour in which to refit.

In 1624 a captain of the French navy, Urbain de Roissey, set sail from Dieppe with the ostensible aim of pursuing pirates but really to attack Spanish commerce in the Caribbean after the traditional fashion. Off the coast of Jamaica he met his match and was badly knocked about by a Spanish galleon. With his little company of thirty-five men in a badly leaking ship he fled to repair the damage in the safe anchorage of St. Christopher which had long served as a refuge for the freebooters. Warner with his little company of Englishmen were only too pleased to welcome them to the island, for the friendship which had at first prevailed between him and the Indian inhabitants was fast changing to open hostility and he feared an attack in overwhelming force. In concert with de Roissey's more celebrated lieutenant, Pierre Belain d'Esnambuc, it was resolved to forestall

the savages, and shortly after the arrival of the Frenchmen, the Caribs were surprised and many of them massacred while an attack in force by the Indians from neighbouring islands was beaten off with great slaughter. The few survivors of its original inhabitants were enslaved by the planters and an agreement was reached between the men of the two white nations to divide St. Christopher between them. The Englishmen as the first-comers established themselves in the more fertile central part of the island and to the French were allotted the lands at either end, an extraordinary arrangement in which lay the seeds of much future trouble seeing that the island measures only twenty-three miles from end to end. But the treaty persisted, and thus before the end of the year 1625 both England and France had laid the first modest foundation stones of their empires in the West Indies.

To explain why those beginnings survived is impossible if attention is merely confined to the enterprises themselves, for it is clear that if the Spaniards from Puerto Rico or Santo Domingo could have spared even a modest force against the handful of colonists in their first year or two, they could have given short shrift to the intruders. Their inability to do so points the fact that circumstances had changed. The once unchallenged mistress of the Caribbean was helpless before her enemies, and the cause of this must be sought not in the West Indies but in the sphere of international politics.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DELUGE FROM THE NORTH, 1625-1637

WHEN Philip IV and Olivares embarked upon their grandiose foreign policy they calculated upon the immobilisation of all their rivals save the irreconcilable Dutch, but all their calculations were upset by the unforeseen happenings of a couple of years. They had underrated England under James I with the astute Gondomar at his ear as an easily gullible and subservient tool, but the insensate rashness of Prince Charles and Buckingham brusquely forced them to revise their estimate after 1623. The two friends returned to England from their escapade in Madrid with their vanity cut to the raw and an outraged determination on immediate war with Spain despite all the protests of the poor old peace-loving King. When a few months later James passed to his unhonoured grave, Charles I and his favourite had for a moment a united England behind them in their plan to revive the Elizabethan policy of a maritime and privateering war on a principle of limited liability that should pay for itself. Almost at the same moment France, too, saw a change that had a vital influence on the European situation. Under Louis XIII and his incompetent mother she had seemed to be falling back into the devastating throes of the civil wars from which Henry IV had rescued her less than thirty years before. But in 1625 the government passed into the strong hands of Richelieu, the greatest and most

astute European statesman for a century, who was relentlessly determined to make a united France the leading power in Europe. Her hegemony could only be founded on the ruins of Spanish power, and Philip IV therefore found a determined enemy where he had been accustomed to look for a complacent ally.

For West Indian history the consequences of the changes of 1625 in England and France were identical. While the great Cardinal was setting the French monarchy on the road to its highest pitch of glory, the new policy of Charles and Buckingham was proving their uncertainty and incompetence to govern England. The nation was being forced through defeat and disgrace down another step on the path to civil war, and its troubles sent forth such a stream of emigrants as had never been seen before. At one and the same moment the policy of their new governors set Englishmen and Frenchmen alike free to pursue their private profit at the expense of a power that was exhausted and almost incapable of defending her possessions in distant seas. After 1625 swarms of English and French colonists poured like flies upon the rotting carcase of Spain's empire in the Caribbean, and within ten years the West Indian scene was changed for ever. With the new ardour for colonisation that was aflame in England and France descents upon the unoccupied islands of the Lesser Antilles were sooner or later inevitable, but that they came when they did, and in unison, was undoubtedly due to the sudden change in the international situation in 1625 and the supreme efforts of the Dutch in their maritime war with Spain that coincided with it.

From the ports of the Netherlands fleet after fleet was poured into the waters of the Indies, manned and



equipped upon a scale such as the islands had never seen before even at the height of the Elizabethan war. Terror and helplessness reigned everywhere upon the coasts, and it was while their enemies were numbed and almost unresistant that the new-comers from the northern nations streamed in in their thousands to establish their colonies and plantations without a blow. For fifteen years, between 1625 and 1640, the influx was hardly checked, and when it waned the map of the West Indies had come almost to be what it remained for a century and a half. Those critical fifteen years were crammed with dramatic and significant events, but their story is dim and inexplicable if we consider the efforts of only each nation in turn, as most of the historians of the West Indies have done. The movement was really one and continuous, though the men of three nations were engaged in it. Those who alone made it possible, the Dutch, won the least permanent advantage and so their share has largely been forgotten, while the English and the French secured lasting colonies whose early history has often been told. We must reverse this order and deal first with the less familiar side of the story, the events of the Dutch maritime war that yet await comprehensive and detailed historical study.

The three powerful fleets that were despatched from Holland for Bahia in the autumn of 1624 found the Portuguese again in possession, as we noted in the last chapter, and they determined to do what was possible to recoup their disappointment in the Caribbean, and in the autumn of 1625 Hendricksz's remaining ships put in at the Leeward and Virgin Islands to refresh and refit. There it was resolved to attempt the capture of Puerto Rico, and to hold it permanently in force if successful. But again the fates were adverse. The city of San Juan

de Puerto Rico was occupied and raids were made along the coasts of the island, but the strongly held citadel that dominated the town could not be forced to yield. After two months' stay on the malarial and disease-ridden coasts of the island, the Dutch were so crippled by their losses that they had reluctantly to abandon their efforts and retire across the Atlantic to refit at Sierra Leone. Thus once again the lessons of earlier expeditions were enforced—that plague and fever were the strongest allies of the Spaniards.

In the following year Hendricksz, after some unsuccessful operations against the Portuguese posts on the coast of Africa, returned to the West Indies and for some months he raided here and there along the coasts of the Spanish Main and the adjacent islands, doing infinitely more damage than he reaped profit. He made many captures of Spanish vessels laden with indigo, sugar, ginger and hides, but their spoils were utterly insufficient to recoup him for his losses or to repay the expenses of fitting out his fleet. His last ravages were along the coast of Cuba, where he died, probably a victim to yellow fever like so many of his companions, and it was but a remnant of his fleet that returned to Holland. Some time before the crippled survivors came back Admiral Piet Hein had been sent out with orders to reinforce Hendricksz in the Caribbean, but he arrived there only to learn of his misfortunes. Instead of undertaking any immediate enterprise in the islands, Hein resolved to sail on to Brazil and attempt the recapture of San Salvador. But despite all his skill and valour he failed, and by the autumn of 1627 he was back in Holland to refit for another attempt. The Spaniards had meanwhile enjoyed no respite, for various small squadrons of independent Dutch had been carrying on

their work of destruction, and the West India Company resolved to make a supreme effort in 1628.

In January two strong fleets were sent out, the first under Dirck Simonszoon van Uitegeest to cruise off the coast of Brazil, and the second under Pieter Adriaensz Ita to attack the Spaniards in the West Indies. Both of them made valuable captures, for van Uitegeest took two heavily laden Portuguese carracks coming from the East Indies, while Ita seized two galleons proceeding from Honduras to their rendezvous with the annual treasure fleet at Havana. The booty captured in each case was very considerable, but these successes were completely eclipsed by the good fortune of Piet Hein, who at last won the prize that had been dreamed of by every sailor for seventy years. Sailing from Holland in May 1628 with a powerful fleet of thirty-one ships and 3000 men, he was charged with the objective of intercepting the annual fleet laden with the treasures of Mexico and Peru, and determined to lie in wait for them in Cuban waters when they had been joined by all their various detachments and before they could find refuge under the guns of Havana. The Caribbean had been almost swept clear and the losses of the Spaniards from the depredations of the other Dutch fleets had deprived them of any opportunity of getting intelligence of what was going on. The galleons were quite unsuspecting of their enemy when in September off the mouth of Matanzas Bay they fell into the jaws of the watchful Dutchmen, who had been kept fully informed by their scouts and by the pirates who infested the Cuban creeks. The first division of nine large merchant ships laden with the produce of a year's labour in the Indies fell to Hein and his men with hardly a blow, and their rich cargoes of hides, cochineal, ginger, cocoa,

indigo and other valuable commodities would alone have been a magnificent capture. But more was in store. Behind them came the four treasure galleons to whom the task of defence was by regulation entrusted; but the old keenness and efficiency of the great days had decayed, and the ships that should have been ready to fight were so crammed with passengers and cargo that it was impossible to do anything but run from their eager enemies. The fleeing Spaniards steered for the narrow opening of the Matanzas river, but before they could reach it they had to be run aground and were an easy prey for the boats that put off from the Dutch vessels with boarding parties. With but a very short resistance the Spaniards surrendered, and thus there fell into Piet Hein's hands the richest booty of all the long years of naval war.

The vast plunder included nearly 200,000 lb. of silver, and 135 lb. of gold, besides quantities of pearls and rich spices. Indigo, cochineal, sugar, logwood and hides formed the heavier part of the cargo, and the whole brought the enormous sum of nearly fifteen million guilders into the coffers of the West India Company, sufficing to pay a dividend of fifty per cent. to the shareholders. The whole of the losses of four years of unsuccessful effort had thus been recouped by one successful stroke and the way was opened for the Company to resume their plans against the Portuguese colonies in Brazil as they did with the expedition to Pernambuco in 1629. To Spain the loss of a whole year's exports from America was irreparable, for the finance of the Crown and its vast European schemes was entirely dependent upon the stream of tribute from the colonies. The soldiers of Philip IV's armies in Germany and on the battle-scarred front in the Low Countries had to remain

unpaid and unsupplied with munitions while their enemies were correspondingly heartened. It was impossible to find funds to pay interest on the loans from the Genoese and other Italian bankers, and Spain's already failing credit in the international money market received a blow from which it never recovered. These world reverberations of Piet Hein's great victory were sufficient alone to account for Spain's paralysis in the Caribbean, but the blow was driven home by lesser happenings in the Indies themselves.

In August 1629, three months after Piet Hein's great fleet had sailed from Holland, a fourth squadron of nine great ships and three smaller ones was despatched to the West Indies under the command of Admiral Adrian Janszoon Pater, and they carried further the devastations of their predecessors. For many months they cruised, pillaging and burning among the ill-defended settlements along the Spanish Main and in Española, while behind them ranged a swarm of privately owned Dutch vessels, traders and pirates by turns as the hopes of profit led them. These lesser marauders, like camp followers, cleared up what vestiges of Spanish power the great organised fleets had left, and before the opening of the year 1630 it may be said that Spain's capacity for maritime defence in the waters of the West Indies had fallen to zero. Local traffic was carried on in little coasting vessels built and owned in the colonies that afforded almost the only prey for the buccaneers, as the pirates were coming to be called. The annual *flota* continued to sail and Piet Hein's exploit was not repeated for another thirty years, but its great days were over. The illicit trade grew year by year and in the hands of the ubiquitous Dutch came to outstrip the legitimate traffic by five or six to one. What wonder, therefore, that the

colonists of the English and the French could go where they would in the islands of the Lesser Antilles and pursue their planting enterprises without fear of Spanish interruption? Their task was now as easy as that of occupying any other unsettled land, and from 1630 onwards the story of West Indian colonisation for many years can be traced with none but occasional mention of those who a decade before had still been the lords of the Caribbean.

We take up the narrative again of what was happening in the lesser islands behind the great Dutch onslaughts in the year 1627. Thomas Warner and his English colonists were planting tobacco in St. Christopher by the side of d'Esnambuc's Frenchmen while Courteen's men were just beginning the settlement of Barbados, and there were a few Dutch plantations in Western Guiana. These last may be neglected for a time while we trace in outline the rise of the rival island colonies. Both Warner and d'Esnambuc left St. Christopher for Europe in the late summer of 1625 within a few weeks of one another to seek from their respective monarchs commissions to establish permanent colonies, and they must have welcomed the news of the outbreak of the war with Spain as justifying hopes that they could hardly have entertained a year earlier. They were not disappointed, for on 13 September 1625 Charles I granted to Warner and his backer, Ralph Merrifield, a privilege to plant and colonise the four islands of St. Christopher, Nevis, Barbados and Montserrat under the protection of the Crown of England. The Frenchmen had longer to wait, for it was not until 31 October 1626 that d'Esnambuc and de Roissey procured from Cardinal Richelieu the privilege of establishing French colonies in the islands of St. Christopher and Barbados. It is

interesting to note that in each case permission was sought and obtained to plant in Barbados though that island had first been reconnoitred by the employees of Sir William Courteen. He had sent out his colonists and proceeded with the work of establishing the settlement without first taking the precaution of obtaining any royal grant, and it was not until 18 February 1628 that a patent was procured by his patron, the Earl of Pembroke, for the colonisation of Trinidad, Tobago, Barbados and the imaginary island of St. Bernard or Fonceta. The French grant of Barbados led to nothing, but the conflicting English grants led to many difficulties both in the Caribbees and at home that caused trouble for many years and ultimately brought ruin to Courteen and his heirs.

It is unnecessary to our purpose to pursue the tortuous Court intrigues by which Warner's patron, James Hay, Earl of Carlisle, had by 1629 fully established his claim under royal patent to be Lord Proprietor of the English Caribbee Islands, including St. Christopher, Nevis and Barbados. Courteen's claims and those of the Earl of Pembroke were entirely set aside, and in Barbados itself his original colonists, after various troubles, were compelled to submit in the long run to the governors that Carlisle sent out to rule over them. The Earl's only interest in the island was in the profits he could derive from the dues levied upon the planters as a contribution to support his endless extravagance. So long as he could derive revenue from its proprietorship he was content to leave the management to the syndicate of London merchants headed by Sir Marmaduke Roydon, for whom his well-rewarded patronage was the cloak. They had embarked upon the speculation to recoup themselves for their loans to the Lord Proprietor

which were not recoverable from his always emptying coffers. Their interest in the colony, therefore, was simply to make as much as they could and as rapidly as possible. To do this they took large grants of land and sent out white servants to till them under the control of overseers. These servants were recruited from the lowest and least fortunate of the English labouring classes at a price of a few shillings per head, and they were compelled to repay the cost of their transportation by delivering the greater part of such crops as they could raise into the stores of the merchants who had sent them out. The troubles that had disturbed Barbados during the two years' struggle over the proprietorship were very adverse to the progress of the colony, but luckily the settlers were never called upon to defend themselves against the Spaniards, for they were quite unorganised, and would have been incapable of doing so. By 1631, 3000 or 4000 Englishmen had been poured into the island, but it was a depressing picture that was painted of its condition by Sir Henry Colt, the first independent visitor whose description has been preserved.

The ground and plantations of the colony looked like the ruins of some village lately burned—here a great timber tree half burned, in another place a rafter singed all black, in a third great stubbs of felled trees with all the earth round them covered with cinders. Nothing was clear, for all around were bushes and long grass, all things carrying the face of a desolate and disorderly show to the beholder. The leaders of the settlers were all young men and of good desert, but they were excessive drinkers of strong waters and, inflamed with their potations, their quarrels were fierce and incessant. The greater part of the indentured servants were idlers and shirkers of any labour they could avoid, and, save



round the settlement, they had done nothing to clear the dense woods and thick undergrowth that covered the island, so that it was impossible to find any open space where those fit to bear arms might be trained and exercised. Defence was utterly neglected, and though the fierce Caribs of St. Vincent, Martinique and Dominica were not very far away there were no guards set and no precautions taken to protect Barbados from a sudden invasion either by the savages or the Spaniards. As yet the island produced very little. The meagre crops of tobacco were earthy and of very poor quality, and only the cotton that was just beginning to be planted by some of the more energetic settlers seemed to offer any chance of continuing profit. Here and there along the coast were a few carefully kept plantations where the servants were directed by a skilful master and a rough plenty prevailed, but the whole impression left upon Colt was that Barbados was 'an island of discord' from whose idle and pestering inhabitants he was anxious to be free. 'Surely', he summed up, 'the Devil, the spirit of discord, hath great power in America, and loose he is amongst Christians as infidels; and wonder not why the naturals war so much the one with the other. Who is he that can long be in quiet in these parts? For all men are here made subject to the power of this Infernal Spirit, and fight they must, although it be with their own friends.'<sup>1</sup> Such is the first sombre account of Barbados under its new English masters, and few who read it could have imagined that within the short space of twenty years the island would be among the most prosperous of the British colonies.

The planters of St. Christopher under the firm and

<sup>1</sup> 'The Voyage of Sir Henry Colt' in *West Indies and Guiana, 1623-1667*, Hakluyt Society, Series II, vol. lvi, pp. 65-70.

able leadership of Sir Thomas Warner were much better organised and more industrious than the first faction-ridden Englishmen in Barbados, and probably the proximity of their French competitors made them look more carefully to their defences. But neither English nor French were allowed to continue their first efforts at planting in peace. Even in the distress and confusion caused by Piet Hein's capture of the treasure fleet the Spanish government was able to spare a thought for the new danger that was threatening them in the Leeward Islands. A fresh *armada* was fitted out as strongly as was possible in the depleted state of the Spanish dockyards and despatched under the able command of Don Fadrique de Toledo to escort the annual fleet of 1629 to and from Cartagena and Vera Cruz.

On his outward voyage he was ordered to call at St. Christopher and make a clean sweep of the intruders. Richelieu got wind of what was intended before Toledo sailed, and his personal interest in the new French colony was sufficient to urge him to counter-measures of defence. His patronage had enabled d'Esnambuc to found a Company of St. Christopher in October 1626 and to secure some subscriptions. But the Company was badly managed, and only a few men were sent out in 1627 to reinforce the handful of Frenchmen in the colony. They were very badly placed, for Warner's strong and well-provided Englishmen held all the more fertile central part of the island, and the French were restricted to the two ends within boundaries which they repeatedly infringed. Certain of the English planters under the leadership of Captain Anthony Hilton had passed into the closely neighbouring island of Nevis and had begun profitable tobacco plantations there. In June 1629 Richelieu promoted the despatch of nine or

ten strongly armed ships to St. Christopher to bring help to the distressed French colonists and to guard them against English encroachments and the threatened Spanish attack.

The French fleet under the command of the Sieur de Cahuzac arrived off the island in August 1629 and was easily able to compel the Englishmen to observe the treaty of partition that had been agreed upon, but Cahuzac was impetuously anxious to begin a corsairing raid into the Gulf of Mexico and, after a few weeks' stay, he rashly concluded that the Spanish *armada* had passed the islands by and that the threat of attack was over. He allowed the ships of his squadron to disperse on privateering courses, but the danger was really just at hand, for only a few days later Toledo appeared off the islands with thirty-five galleons besides accompanying merchantmen, an overwhelming force against which resistance was futile. The English settlers on Nevis were dealt with first; they were compelled to surrender and were taken prisoner, while their crops were destroyed and their newly erected houses burned. At St. Christopher the English and French joined forces and attempted to prevent the Spaniards landing. But they could put up only a feeble resistance. The Frenchmen fled to seek refuge on some of Cahuzac's ships that had opportunely returned, and were carried away to the waterless island of St. Martin, thence to scatter, first to Antigua and later to Montserrat. The English to the number of some 700 were forced to surrender, while about 200 or 300 more scattered into the thickets of the interior. Thither the Spaniards did not pursue them, for Toledo was anxious to proceed with his voyage in order to guard the *flota* against a strong new fleet under Admiral Pater that he knew was

being sent out from Holland. He packed his prisoners on board some of the merchantmen he had captured, and sent them off to England, while he retained certain hostages to secure the return of the ships. The plantations both of the English and the French were destroyed and the Spaniards sailed away on the main purpose of their voyage, with the threat that on another occasion they would shew no like measure of mercy, but would give no quarter to any men of other nations they found planting in the islands that by right were theirs.

Sixty years before such a threat would have been no idle one, as Menendez had proved in Florida, but times had changed and the scattered settlers cared little for it. They knew that their enemies were at the point of utter exhaustion and that the relentless Dutch were giving them no respite. When the dangerous invasion of the Netherlands by strong forces of Spaniards and Imperialists had been repulsed by the military genius of the Stadholder Maurice of Orange, a new fleet, the strongest that had ever been despatched from Holland, was launched for a new attempt against Brazil, while smaller squadrons were sent to continue the pressure upon the West Indies. During 1629 Admiral Pater was incessant in his descents upon the coasts of Cuba, Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo; when he was joined by strong reinforcements under Jan Jansz of Hoorn he passed across to the Main and raided the Spanish settlements about the mouth of the Orinoco and in Trinidad. In 1630 they were followed by fresh squadrons under Dirck de Ruyter and Pieter Adriaensz Ita, who cruised off Havana and the exit from the Florida Channel, while Pater with a fresh fleet was directed to the waters off Santa Marta and Cartagena. So the stream of strongly armed attackers was constantly fed, while behind them came private

Dutch men-of-war to seek their profit in clearing up what the Company's forces had left. Gradually every Spanish ship but those of the annual *armadas* was swept from the sea, and none but the ubiquitous Dutch traders could be found to purchase the produce of the colonists and supply the manufactured goods they sorely needed. Thus the Hollanders rapidly came to monopolise the essential commerce between the Indies and their European markets. The captures made by the armed vessels might be the more spectacular, but it was the steady profits won by their traders that poured most wealth into the coffers of the merchants of the Dutch cities and raised Holland and Zeeland to be the richest provinces in Europe. Neither England nor France could seriously compete but both also benefited, for their colonists were relieved from the Spanish danger and the way was kept clear for any planting enterprises they cared to attempt.

Sir Thomas Warner was in England when the news of the disaster that had overtaken St. Christopher reached him, but undaunted by Spanish threats he was determined to return and begin his work of colonisation afresh. By May 1630 he was back in the islands and soon gathered round him the Englishmen who had fled to the woods. The destroyed plantations were cleared and fresh servants were brought in to replace those who had been scattered; but the English settlers were weaker than they had been before the Spanish attack, and they now were only approximately equal to the French and could not venture upon aggressive action. D'Esnambuc's men had undergone many hardships in their search for a new home for their colony, and they too returned joyfully to St. Christopher as soon as they knew that the Spaniards had departed without leaving a garrison in

the island. Thus by the middle of 1630 planting in St. Christopher and Nevis was again in full swing, and it was clearly proved that the Spaniards had effected nothing permanent to achieve their design to keep out the intruders.

The inflow of English and French colonists increased at a very rapid rate after 1631 and the population of the islands grew enormously. As the fertile land in St. Christopher became fully occupied, many of the newcomers and the less successful planters were compelled to seek opportunities elsewhere, and thus the first colonies became the parents of new settlements. Antigua and Montserrat were occupied as early as 1632, though they had no regularly organised government before 1635. Many emigrant Irish came out among the early planters and servants in these islands, and these were the first incomers from a source that was to play a part of great importance in the British West Indies in later years.

The Dutch took little part in the promotion of planting, for their energies were fully engaged in privateering and the carrying on of their profitable illicit trade. The West India Company was deeply immersed in its conquest of Brazil, and when private Dutch merchants tried planting their efforts were usually confined to Western Guiana where they met with some permanent success, as we shall see later. On their return voyage from Pernambuco certain of the Company's ships passed homewards through the Caribbean and in 1633 the squadron of Jan Jansz of Hoorn was ordered to undertake the capture of one of the few Spanish ports in the Caribbean that as yet had not been pillaged by the Dutch. Truxillo, the port of the province of Honduras, lies beyond the banks and shoals of the Bay

Islands in the remoter part of the Caribbean and afforded less chance of plunder than the greater and more strongly defended ports. But as the dangers of the open sea passage had increased, the Spaniards had been driven to carry on the communications between their isolated settlements by means of small shallow-draught vessels that kept to coastal waters, and they were planning a new route for the transport of the treasure from the Pacific *via* Nicaragua and Guatemala. It was with the design of blocking this new route that Jan Jansz was charged to attack Truxillo. The town was defended on the seaward side against the attacks of corsairs but landward it lay quite open, for it had never had to suffer from an attack in force. Hence it fell an easy prey to Jansz' landing parties of trained soldiers. The amount of booty captured was disappointing, for no treasure was found, and only hides, sarsaparilla and a little indigo rewarded the Dutchmen's efforts. Whether by accident or in revenge, the greater part of the city was burned before the raiders sailed away. The lesson taught by the capture was unmistakable. The lesser towns of the Indies were an easy prey for an organised force in the atrophy that had descended upon the Spanish arms, but the booty they could yield was entirely insufficient to repay the expense of attack, and no results of military value could be expected. The real riches of the country lay not in the towns but in the wide ranches of the interior which could not be reached. The Spanish colonies of the mainland, in fact, were so primitive in their economic structure that they were self-sufficing and unassailable by armed forces of the comparatively small size the Dutch could alone land from their squadrons. The lesson was repeated at San Francisco de Campeche, the principal port of the peninsula of Yucatan, which also was cap-

tured by Jan Jansz with his landing parties. Again, the small vessels taken in the harbour were laden only with hides and logwood of comparatively slight value, and it was found impossible to extract a ransom from the city, for the governor protested that neither he nor the citizens had any money, and that their sole wealth consisted of their cattle on the ranches of the interior and the forests in which they cut their dye-woods.

Though the central Spanish power was not in a position to organise any effective resistance to the Dutch fleets, individual governors with locally raised forces were sometimes able to deal with small parties of the intruders; and even in 1633, while Jan Jansz was carrying out his destructive raids farther north, Juan de Eulate, governor of Margarita, was proving himself as energetic and ruthless as the Spanish *conquistadores* of a generation earlier. He first attacked and destroyed an English trading settlement in Trinidad, and then passed on to deal with a party of Dutchmen who were planting tobacco in Tobago, apparently the first European settlers in that island. The settlers were surprised and slaughtered to a man without mercy, a feat which Eulate reported with pride to his superiors as meriting high reward. In the same year the Dutch salt-makers in St. Martin's were attacked from Puerto Rico, and all those who could not escape were slain. To prevent their return a Spanish garrison was established in the island and maintained for some years with consequences of importance farther south.

The shrewd merchant leaders of the West India Company were becoming alive to the fact that warfare in the Caribbean on a large scale would not pay its expenses, and after 1633 they turned their efforts in the region more and more towards the trade from which they knew



that they could expect steady returns. Those returns would be better assured if they could establish an advanced dépôt near to the mainland coast. A post on the Spanish Main itself would have needed strong land defences and the maintenance of a powerful garrison in the unhealthy and enervating conditions of a tropical city. But in the complete decay of Spanish naval power an island base would be almost impregnable, and the Company saw such an ideal stronghold in the barren island of Curaçao, lying off the coast of Venezuela, and affording easy access to every part of the Main. The islands of which Curaçao is the chief also offered an attraction in the possibilities of procuring large quantities of salt, which in the seventeenth century was an essential commodity for the great herring fishing industry on which the prosperity of Holland had first been built. In the sixteenth century the salt for Enkhuizen, Hoorn and the other little fishing ports of the Zuyder Zee had been brought from the salt-pans of southern Portugal, and when those were closed to the Dutch by the naval war, they had gone across the Atlantic to work the salt-mines of Punta Araya on the Venezuelan coast. Thence they had been driven out by the attack of Spanish land forces after the reopening of the war, and the price of salt in Holland, therefore, rose very considerably. Attempts had been made to produce salt by evaporating sea-water in St. Martin's in the Leeward Islands, but the island was not easily defensible, and, as we have seen, the unarmed Dutch salt-makers there were dispersed or destroyed and the island garrisoned by the Spaniards in 1633. From the information of various private captains who had laded salt there, the directors of the West India Company thought the island of Curaçao, with its larger size and excellent

harbour, might easily be fortified, and it was determined to seize and hold it in strength.

In April 1634 four ships were sent out from Holland under the command of Joannes van Walbeck, who had done good service for the Company in Brazil; and after reconnoitring La Guayra, the port of Caracas, whence the Spaniards might be expected to come out against them, they found the enemy quite unwarned and the force was landed in Curaçao early in August without opposition. There was only a handful of Spaniards in the island, and after a few days' negotiation they surrendered on condition that they should be transported with their families and movable belongings to the mainland. Thus the Netherlands won an excellent vantage-point with hardly a blow and, ever since, Curaçao has been the centre of Dutch power in the West Indies. Between 1635 and 1637 there were various threats of Spanish attack, but they did not succeed. The main island was strongly fortified and provided with a garrison, while the neighbouring islets of Buen Ayre and Oruba with valuable salt-pans were occupied and the Dutch need of salt could thus be assured of supply.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE BEGINNINGS OF THE BUCCANEERS,

1630-1641

THE foundation of the Dutch stronghold in Curaçao was exactly contemporary with a similar English attempt in the waters immediately to the west of the route from the Isthmus to Havana, which led to perhaps the strangest alliance that the islands have ever seen—an association between strict and godly Puritans desirous of founding a refuge of those oppressed for religion's sake and the 'cow-killers' or buccaneers of Hispaniola who were notorious for their licentious and bloodthirsty savagery.

Before the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century the Spaniards had abandoned the whole of the north and west of Española, and the dense tropical forests and thickets had sunk back to their primeval desolation. The aboriginal inhabitants had perished or been absorbed into the stock of Spanish half-breeds and their negro slaves. The only closely settled regions in the island lay in the plains of the south-east behind the city of Santo Domingo, but there were a few scattered cattle-ranches stretching back to the northern woods, and these afforded a link with the illicit Dutch traders who frequented various harbours on the coast. Those ports were often visited also by corsairs for the purpose of watering, victualling and refitting their ships. Many stragglers from their crews remained behind on shore

when they departed, and they were joined by refugees from wrecked vessels, by fugitive negro slaves, *cimarones* or 'maroons' who had escaped from the Spanish settlements, and by men who as a punishment had been 'marooned', that is, had been thrust ashore from the ships to fend for themselves on the desolate coast among the maroons. Through the forests roamed vast herds of wild cattle and swine descended from those introduced by the first colonists, and the wandering desperadoes found a precarious means of preserving existence by hunting them for their meat, and so there came into being a wild and lawless company of dwellers in the woods who played an important part in West Indian history for a century or more.

Before 1631 they were known to Englishmen simply as the 'cow-killers', and in Sir Henry Colt's time we learn from his letters that a threat to send an insubordinate sailor to the cow-killers was greatly dreaded. Later a specialised name was applied to them by the English and the Dutch, and first the hunters and afterwards any who associated with them came to be known as 'buccaneers'. The French called them *flibustiers*, because they were accustomed to use light craft like the Dutch 'fly-boats' in their attacks upon the Spanish vessels that came near their coasts. The Abbé du Tertre, who knew them well after the middle of the century, has given us a picture of their savage and uncouth manners in his time that is probably the nearest first-hand description of those who first roamed the Hispaniola woods somewhere about 1630.

'The buccaneers,' wrote he, 'are so called from the word *boucan*, which is a sort of wooden grid-iron, made of several sticks placed upon four forks, upon which the

*boucaniers* broil their hogs, sometimes quite whole, with which they feed themselves without eating any bread. They were at this time an unorganised rabble of men from all countries, rendered expert and active by the necessity of their exercise which was to go in chase of cattle to obtain their hides, and from being chased themselves by the Spaniards who never gave them any quarter. As they would never suffer any chiefs, they passed for undisciplined men, for the greater part had sought refuge in these places and were reduced to this way of life to avoid the punishments due for the crimes which they had committed in Europe, and which could be proved against many of them.

‘In general they were without any habitation or fixed abode, but only rendezvoused where the cattle were to be found, and some sheds covered with leaves to keep off the rain and to store the hides of the beasts they had killed until some vessels should pass to barter for them with wine, brandy, line, arms, powder, bullets and cooking vessels which they needed and which are the only moveables of the buccaneers. . . . They were dressed in a pair of drawers and a shirt at the most, shod with the skin of a hog’s leg fastened on the top, and behind the foot with strips of the same skin, girded round the middle of their body with a sack which served them to sleep in as a defence against the innumerable insects which bit and sucked the blood from all parts of their bodies that were left uncovered. . . . When they returned from the chase to the *boucan*, you would say that these are the butcher’s vilest servants who have been eight days in the slaughter-house without washing themselves. I have seen some who had lived this miserable life for twenty years without seeing a priest and without eating bread.’—Such were the new and feroci-

ous enemies between whom and the Spaniards mercy was neither expected nor asked.

In the decade between 1620 and 1630 the rovers of different nations mostly frequented particular harbours on the Hispaniola coast, the Dutch calling near Cape San Nicolas where there were salt-pans, the French at La Gonaive to the west of the island and the English at Samana in the east. But one harbour was often visited by men of all three nations, that of Tortuga, an island close to the north coast and not far removed from the site of Columbus' earliest settlement in the New World. A year or so before 1630 the hunters had established something of a rough place of settlement on Tortuga, where there grew up a systematic victualling trade between them and the rovers, and hides, meat and tallow could be exchanged for ammunition and such rough stores as the buccaneers needed. Early in 1631 the Spaniards from Santo Domingo raided this new nest of robbers and drove them out, leaving a small garrison of twenty-five soldiers to prevent their return.

Soon after the first settlement of St. Christopher in 1625, one Anthony Hilton, a ship-master, arrived in the colony, but there he found it impossible to agree with Warner, and removed to the north side of the island where he was the first to begin planting. Thence he went with some other discontented planters to the adjacent island of Nevis and became the leader of a new colony there. When the Spaniards destroyed the English settlement in Nevis in 1629, Hilton looked about for another likely place where he could combine planting with piracy, and he determined to establish himself in Tortuga. He went to England to get financial help from some source that would be less exacting in demanding returns than were Sir Thomas Warner and the

merchants who were working the patents of the Earl of Carlisle, and he found the support that he was looking for in the rival syndicate headed by the Earl of Warwick that had recently begun a new colony in the island of Santa Catalina or Providence off the coast of Nicaragua.

The Providence Company had its origin in movements quite distinct from those that were pouring English settlers into the Leeward Islands and Barbados. Its promoters were closely identified with one of the factions that had been concerned in the Virginia Company and North's unsuccessful Company of the Amazons in the later years of James I. They were imbued with the ideas of the theoretical colonisers of Elizabeth's reign, and besides their efforts in Virginia they were also associated with schemes for the colonisation of the coast of North America under the patent granted to the Council for New England. The moving spirit in both cases was Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick, who was deeply implicated in the promotion of Anglo-Dutch privateering enterprises against the Spaniards, and was also known as a prominent leader of the political party of the Puritans. Warwick's first experiment in colonisation was in the Bermudas or Somers Islands, whither between 1615 and 1623 he and his friends sent out many recruited servants at their own expense to plant tobacco upon their estates. Neither Warwick nor his settlers were satisfied with the results they obtained in the Bermudas, and when the Puritans in 1629 were looking for a place of settlement and refuge for their supporters who had come into conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities in England, Warwick pointed to the West Indies as the most suitable place, for there they could combine planting with privateering against the Spaniards as sources of profit.

The promoters, of whom the most active executive agent was the celebrated Puritan, John Pym, chose as the site of their new colony two uninhabited islands in the heart of the Caribbean to which they gave the names of Providence and Henrietta, and there they, or at any rate some of them, planned to erect a new political community on the most approved Puritan model. But Puritan settlers proved hard to obtain, and the Providence colony was begun instead with many of the discontented colonists from Bermuda under the governorship of Captain Philip Bell, who had already proved himself a capable leader.

The choice of a site for the colony was almost foolhardy, for the islands lay in the very jaws of the Spaniards on the flank of the regular route from Puerto Bello to Havana. Only the exhaustion of Spanish power by the attacks of the Dutch could ever have permitted Englishmen to occupy such a dangerous stronghold, but probably from the very beginning Warwick and his friends thought of Providence as a suitable privateering base from which to organise attacks against the trade from the Isthmus. The island was as strongly fortified as the subscriptions would permit, and from the first it became a serious thorn in the side of the Spaniards and a rendezvous for all the privateers and pirates in the Caribbean. The incongruity of the association of the biblical phraseology beloved by Puritans and the patriotic propaganda of the Elizabethan age with the buccaneering lack of scruple of a later time makes the history of the Providence colony extraordinary reading. It forms the connecting link between almost every English colonising enterprise in the first half of the seventeenth century from Virginia and Bermuda to New England and Jamaica, and thus it is of much greater



importance than its actual accomplishments would justify. The plans for establishing a strong planting industry like that in St. Christopher and Barbados never materialised, and the promoters could obtain no profits from their great expenditure of capital, though some of the men-of-war did well.

Hilton's new colony in Tortuga was brought under the control of the Providence Company in 1631 by the agreement mentioned above, and it rapidly grew, as wandering Englishmen and Frenchmen were attracted to it by the opportunities it afforded of finding employment on the privateers who made it their base. There were constant desertions of indentured servants from the hard discipline and constant labour of St. Christopher and Barbados, and the laxity and excitement of life in Tortuga, which alternated logwood-cutting and cattle-hunting in the Hispaniola forests with the prospects of adventure and booty at sea, made the new settlement the goal of every fugitive scoundrel in the West Indies.

Needless to say, the island was the scene of disorder and excess of every kind, and in 1633 the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo resolved that the desperadoes must be cleared out once more, and a ruthless lesson taught to any who were tempted to follow their pernicious example. But it was not until 1635, when the dissensions between the English and French in Tortuga became so acute as to lead to constant fights, that the Spaniards took advantage of the intelligence brought to them by an Irish deserter from the English colony named John Murphy, and descended upon the settlement in force. It fell into their hands with hardly a show of resistance, for the English governor fled at once on board a ship that happened to be in the harbour and left the colonists to

their fate. A few of them managed to make their escape into the Hispaniola forests, but nearly 600 men, women and children fell into the Spaniards' hands and they met small mercy. The women were carried off into what was little better than perpetual slavery, while most of the men were massacred.

The tragic news from Tortuga reached England only a few weeks before the tidings that Providence had also been the object of attack by a strong Spanish force from Cartagena. But the larger island was in a much better state of defence than the buccaneers' settlements, and the natural difficulties of the approach to it through a maze of reefs and coral cays completely baffled the attackers. After many days of unsuccessful effort to get to close quarters, the Spanish ships were compelled to retire beaten and Providence was granted another six years of life. Almost all pretence of planting on the island was henceforward abandoned, and all the energies of the colonists were turned to their depredations on the Spaniards. They gathered into their almost unapproachable harbour many of the men-of-war who were roaming the Caribbean 'for purchase' as they called it, *i.e.* for any booty they could capture by luck or audacity. It was a precarious life of danger, punctuated with disorderly revels in the small town that had grown up near the harbour, and the colony was far removed from the godly Puritan settlement of which its original founders had dreamed. But as their Puritanism waned, so the anti-Spanish hatred of the colonists became more inflamed, while the leaders of the Company at home merged their colonising ideas in wider schemes of national aggrandisement.

The change in the character of Providence from an experiment in Puritan colonisation to a privateering

stronghold came at a time when the West Indies were again coming into the foreground of international politics; but before we can deal with this we must say a word as to what had been happening to the French colonists under d'Esnambuc whom we left after their expulsion from St. Christopher in 1629. In his wanderings with his fugitive followers d'Esnambuc explored the possibilities of various islands in the Leeward group to afford fertile planting grounds. St. Bartholomew, Barbuda, St. Eustatius and Anguilla were explored in turn, but their small size or deficient water-supply made them unattractive. The French colonists soon learned that the English had returned to St. Christopher when Don Fadrique de Toledo's fleet had departed, and they followed their example; and, finding their way back to their devastated plantations, they reoccupied their parts of St. Christopher, despite English opposition, and continued their interrupted work, with the meagre support that was all that the Company of St. Christopher could afford, even though the promise was made to them that St. Christopher tobacco should be allowed entry to France. Had it not been for the possibility of selling its tobacco to the Dutch, it is certain that the colony could not have survived its early troubles.

While the terrible war in Germany was mounting to its height after 1630, the Western powers were brought back to a state of uneasy official peace by various treaties in each of which Richelieu managed to secure advantage for France. To extricate herself from the Italian war Spain was forced to agree to ignominious conditions at Cherasco (April 1631), and England was almost contemptuously warned off from interference with Richelieu's European policy by the treaties of Susa (April 1629) and St. Germain-en-Laye (March

1632). Charles I had won nothing by his futile war with Spain, and with characteristic inconstancy, by a secret article attached to the treaty of Madrid (December 1630—January 1631) which closed it, he pledged himself to enter into alliance with Spain against his former allies, the Dutch. Thus for a year or two neither the English nor the French colonists in the West Indies could look for any open governmental influence or support in their schemes. But by 1635 the scene had changed again; the colonies were useful outposts in the Indies when Richelieu was ready once more to take up arms against Spain and was determined to wage the war upon the widest scale.

With his newly organised navy the Cardinal launched diversions in various directions, to divide Spain's forces and prevent their concentration on the battle-front in Flanders where the Dutch armies were hard pressed. Among the various secondary objectives that were tried for, the traditional French policy of diversion in the West Indies was taken up again with vigour, and it had consequences of first-rate importance in the history of the Antilles. The French navy was too fully occupied on the coast of Spain and in the Mediterranean to undertake operations across the Atlantic, and that was left to the Dutch, who were encouraged to an intensified attack on the Portuguese subjects of Philip IV in Brazil. Direct French assistance was limited to the newly founded colonies in the Antilles, and Richelieu followed Dutch precedents by establishing with governmental help a great West Indian company financed by private subscriptions. The *Compagnie des Isles d'Amérique* received the royal letters patent in March 1635, and began its operations on a much larger scale than had ever been possible for the earlier Company of

St. Christopher. Strong reinforcements were sent out to Governor d'Esnambuc, and he was encouraged to fit out privateers against the Spaniards and to take possession of the large Carib islands to the south which he had reconnoitred in 1634. The Cardinal was determined to make a serious bid for colonial empire in the West Indies, and secured the grant of full monopoly rights to the new Company for twenty years, on condition that it should transport and supply 4000 emigrants within a stated time. Various syndicates of private merchants were formed to take up portions of the Company's grant in return for rents to be paid in tobacco or cotton; and to such subsidiary syndicates are due the beginnings of the important and permanent French colonies in Guadeloupe and Martinique. Both received their first settlers in 1635, but they went through many difficulties with the Caribs who infested all the Windward Islands, and the first colonists suffered terrible privations and found it very difficult to raise sufficient crops of tobacco or cotton to maintain themselves. It was only later when they turned to sugar, as did the English islands, that they were embarked on the sure road to prosperity.

Neither Richelieu nor the Dutch expected to get much effective assistance from England in the new general war against Spain, for the divisions in the distracted island of Great Britain were notorious. But they could not as yet safely afford to neglect King Charles, and they tried by diplomatic negotiations to persuade him to undertake naval operations against Spain. By 1636 the pro-Spanish party at Court was completely discredited by the failure to obtain any results from its subservient policy, and once again the advocates of a return to the traditional Elizabethan ideas of maritime aggression against the Spanish Indies came into the

ascendant. The Earl of Warwick and his brother, the Earl of Holland, were the most prominent supporters of the policy of national maritime action in the Caribbean, and, backed by the statesmanlike ability of John Pym, they proposed to make the Providence colony the centre of a vast scheme of aggression. Before much could be attempted, however, England was plunged into the difficulties of the Scottish war, and the clouds of domestic revolution completely overshadowed the memory of what Warwick and Pym had planned. Their schemes were unknown to later generations, but they were of real importance, for in them lay the undoubted germs of the West Indian policy of the Protectorate. Cromwell was the close friend and associate of the founders of Providence, and at one moment, in fact, in 1638 or 1639, he seriously contemplated emigrating there. All the knowledge of West Indian affairs on which he based his policy in 1655 was coloured by the experience of the Providence Company.

The new design was for the foundation of an English West India Association modelled upon the Dutch West India Company, which was then at the height of its success. All the English colonies in the West Indies were to be included in the new Association, but its spear-head was to be in Providence, for there Englishmen were apparently firmly established nearer to the essential Spanish treasure route across the Isthmus than any of Spain's enemies had ever been. But even had England been as strong and united as she was weak and distracted, the great 'Western Design' for the conquest of Central America and thus the mastery of the Indies would have been impossible of accomplishment. Nevertheless it was an essential factor in the West Indian history of the time, and it alone knits together and

explains the connection between the many Caribbean enterprises with which Warwick and his friends were associated between 1637 and 1643. Separately they seem aimless and inexplicable, but round the central idea they fall into place and, unsuccessful though all of them were, they are worthy of remembrance as parts of a grandiose imperial West Indian policy in embryo.

When Providence rapidly lost the characteristics that differentiated it from other West Indian colonies and became merely a base for English and Dutch corsairs, the Company ceased to send out magazines of goods to supply the colonists, for they could purchase everything they required from the Dutch at much cheaper rates. They paid for them with the hides, indigo, ginger, etc., that they looted from the Spaniards, and with the cotton and tobacco that they raised on plantations cultivated by negroes that were brought by Dutch slavers. Few indentured white servants were sent out from England, for they could not be disposed of, but many free men came down from the now flourishing Puritan colonies in New England in search of profitable cargoes and adventure. There was more frequent communication with Boston and Salem than with London, and the New England ship-owners used the colony as an advanced base for trade with the Indians of Darien and other parts of the mainland, which they shared with the Dutch regardless of the prohibitions of the English government. As the help they received from England dwindled, the colonists came to look to Massachusetts for support, and they obtained ordnance, ammunition and trained gunners thence to man their forts. The labour in the island was almost wholly performed by the negro slaves who had by 1637 come to form half its population. The white men formed either part of

the garrison or were engaged on the armed ships that, under the English or Dutch flag, preyed on the Spanish coastwise traffic between Cartagena or Puerto Bello and the ports of Honduras and Yucatan, or even farther afield.

In 1638 the importance of Providence as a privateering stronghold was marked by the character of the new governor sent out by the Earl of Warwick. Captain Nathaniel Butler was Governor of Bermuda from 1619 to 1622, and got into trouble there for harbouring pirates and for his lack of scruple in dealing with Spanish goods that came into his hands. He was later employed in the navy and was in command of one of the ships in the expedition against Cadiz in 1625 and again in Buckingham's enterprise at Isle de Ré. He was undoubtedly an active and enterprising sailor, and Warwick's selection of him from the command of a frigate in the Royal Navy, in which he was serving in 1637, is significant. Butler was designed by his patrons to pursue a forward policy against the Spaniards and to take up the aggressive part in the Caribbean which the Dutch West India Company was rather slackening from, because of their absorption in the conquest of Brazil.

The new governor took out with him several ships heavily armed by Warwick and, a few months after his arrival in Providence, he got together a mixed force of Dutch and English men-of-war and set out on a raiding cruise against the Spanish settlements in the Gulf of Honduras. The venture was fairly profitable, and it culminated in the capture of Truxillo in the late summer of 1639 and its ransom for the considerable sum of 16,000 pieces of eight paid by the citizens partly in bullion and partly in indigo.



Meanwhile other of the colony's leaders were exploring the wild coast of Nicaragua which the Spaniards had never succeeded in conquering from the Mosquito Indians. In conjunction with a Dutch captain, Abraham Blauvelt (or as the English called him, 'Blewfields'), they built up a trade with the Indians along the course of a considerable river that led far into the interior. This river, which has since the seventeenth century been known to Englishmen as the Blewfields river, seemed to offer an unguarded avenue of approach by which an attack might be launched against the rich Spanish colonies round the Lake of Nicaragua, and thence by an easy route to the Pacific coast. This route or one closely parallel to it had been thought of by the Spaniards as an alternative to the usual treasure road from Panama to Puerto Bello, and it was, in the dangers of the maritime war, occasionally used for the transport of the treasure convoys. Blauvelt's exploration of it, therefore, was of great interest to the originators of the 'Western Design', and pointed to possibilities of launching war against Spain in a new direction.

Farther north the colonists from Providence founded small settlements and raised crops on plantations on the mainland round Cape Gracias à Dios and explored the numerous islands and creeks along that coast and far into the depths of the Gulf of Honduras. The most important of those islands was that of Ruatan, where in 1638 plantations were begun by men from Virginia and New England. Later, difficulties due to our civil war prevented the consolidation of these colonies, but they began an English connection with the Bay Islands which was not broken until the nineteenth century. They were important as pointing another route by which attack might be directed from an advanced island base against

the Spanish colonies in Honduras and Guatemala. Their additional connection with the beginnings of the logwood-cutting industry will be dealt with in a later chapter.

Meanwhile the Earl of Warwick was trying to consolidate the English interests in the Windward Islands. The Earl of Pembroke, who in 1627 had failed to enforce his claims to Barbados against the Earl of Carlisle, had never done much to colonise the other islands where his freedom of action was undisputed. About 1634 Pembroke tried to interest the merchants of the west of England in a project for colonising Tobago, Trinidad and Margarita, but the scheme could not attract any financial support. The Earl then disposed of all his rights under his patent to Warwick, and the old quarrel over the proprietorship of the island of Barbados was reopened with the heirs of the Earl of Carlisle, in whose favour it had been decided ten years before. The Barbadians, however, would have nothing to do with the governors whom Warwick sent out, while Sir Henry Hunks, a skilful soldier from the Netherlands who was charged by Carlisle to organise the military forces in the island, was compelled to depart for Antigua. In the rivalry of Warwick with the Carlisle claims they saw an excellent opportunity of furthering their own independence, and they pursued it diligently with effects that will appear later.

In Tobago and Trinidad Warwick at his own expense endeavoured to found plantation colonies with various discontented Bermudians and refugees from Providence. These attempts extended over several years, from 1639 to 1645, but were uniformly unsuccessful. There were few or no fresh emigrants from England engaged in them, for the troubles of the civil war had dried up the

stream of landless men seeking their fortune oversea that had been flowing so vigorously for ten years. The men composing these later expeditions either came from New England, where they found the strict discipline irksome, or from the densely overcrowded settlements in St. Christopher and Barbados, where it was impossible to make a living. Swarms of disappointed and desperate men, both English and French, were at this time wandering about the Antilles in search of any island where they could keep themselves alive, and it was among such unfortunate derelicts that Warwick's captains found their recruits.

When Tortuga was sacked by the Spaniards in 1635 and its settlers massacred, a few stragglers succeeded in escaping to the woods on the adjacent coast and, as soon as their enemies had departed, they returned with various of the cow-killers and resumed occupation of the island. News of their presence in Tortuga was carried to England by the privateers, and in 1637 the Providence Company discussed the advisability of resuming the occupation of the island in force. But their means were now limited, and it was proposed instead to transfer the colony to the Dutch West India Company, and the permission of the Crown was sought for this. The petition was made at the moment when Charles I had warmly taken up Warwick's 'Western Design' and was looking forward to an active naval policy to be paid for by his newly collected ship-money. He therefore informed the Company that he could not permit them to make any sale to the Dutch, and urged them to re-fortify Tortuga as a valuable stronghold. However, the project came to nothing, for a little later the news reached England that the settlers had dispersed upon the Hispaniola coast.

The passion for wandering from island to island in search of some easy way to wealth or merely in search of change is a noticeable trait of all our early colonists in the West Indies. The average man who had left the equable though narrow course of his life in England to emigrate across the Atlantic must have had something of the spirit of adventure in him. When he found that his new life in St. Christopher or Barbados offered nothing at the best but a mere subsistence in return for unremitting toil, what wonder that he cast envious eyes at the rovers in the harbour with their reckless prodigality, and was tempted to wander forth in search of some new treasure island? About 1639 the fever was rising to its height, for the white population in the islands was nearing its maximum, and it was desperately difficult to make a living in the settled colonies. Some of the wanderers, and among them both French and English stragglers from St. Christopher and Nevis, came together in Tortuga in the summer of 1639 and applied better planting methods to its fertile soil than had ever been tried before, so that its tobacco sold well. Their leader was one Captain Roger Flood, who had been at one time an officer in Providence, but was incapable of keeping peace between the men of the two nations. The French accused him of grievously oppressing them and made an appeal for assistance to Monsieur de Poincy, Governor of St. Christopher and intendant of all the French islands. De Poincy had been troubled by the rivalry between the Catholic and Huguenot settlers in the colonies, and he now saw an opportunity of getting rid of his quarrelsome Calvinists with advantage. He entrusted the assembling and the command of a privately equipped expedition to the ablest and most enterprising Calvinist in St. Christopher,

Monsieur Le Vasseur. He was the leader of a remnant of the Huguenot followers of the Seigneur de Soubise who, after the fall of La Rochelle, the last stronghold of the reformed religion, before Richelieu's military genius, had been homeless wanderers. Some of them along with Le Vasseur, who had received a fine training as a military engineer in the siege of La Rochelle, came to St. Christopher to join d'Esnambuc soon after 1625, and after the reoccupation of the island in 1629 other Calvinist soldiers found a refuge there, and it was among these skilled men that Le Vasseur found the recruits for his expedition against Tortuga. He had little difficulty in driving out the ill-organised English colonists, and early in 1640 he was in full possession of the island, and applied all his military knowledge to its systematic fortification. The end of the period with which we are dealing, therefore, saw the French firmly established off the north coast of Hispaniola with consequences of great importance in subsequent years. Their strength was increased by the recruits they could draw in time of danger both from the *boucaniers* of the forest and the *flibustiers* who roved the sea; and thus Tortuga rapidly became one of the most notorious pirate holds from which attacks were launched against the Spaniards and to which the resulting booty was carried for division.

While French power was thus on the ascendant, soon after 1640 the strength of the English privateers appeared to be clearly on the decline. Just as with the settlement of St. Christopher and Barbados in 1625 we marked the beginning of a new era, so with the last events in the history of Providence we may date its close. The Puritan colony had become such a serious danger to the communications of the Indies and even to the safety of the dwindling annual fleets that its

destruction was imperative. The failure of the attack of 1635 was regarded as a far more serious blow to Spanish pride than any occupation of the neglected islands of the Lesser Antilles. Philip IV and his ministers, judging by their successes at St. Christopher and St. Martin's, believed that they could drive out the intruding planters whenever opportunity offered. But in Providence or Santa Catalina a few thousand heretics had established a well-armed fortress that served as a piratical rendezvous in the very heart of the Indies, and there they flaunted their hatred of everything Catholic with impudent effrontery.

On 11 December 1636 the King summoned a joint meeting of his Council of State, the Council of War, and the Council of the Indies to concert measures for the removal of this flagrant affront to Spanish honour, and there was some very plain speaking. Some of the councillors shewed that they, at least, were not blind to the terrible realities of their nation's decline. They were agreed that the best moment had been lost when the great military and naval forces prepared for the expulsion of the Dutch from Curaçao had been diverted to Brazil, and funds and ships were now lacking for a strong expedition from Spain itself. Nothing but a great and powerful fleet stationed in the Caribbean and with some of its vessels constantly at sea could effect the colossal task of clearing those waters of the pirates, but such a fleet it was impossible for the impoverished Spanish government to supply. Even at the height of Philip II's power with a leader of genius like Menendez at his disposal the task had proved enormous, and now with lesser resources and enemies more numerous than ever it was manifestly impossible. It appeared to be the best course to give the governors of Cartagena, Puerto

Bello and Panama a free hand to try and dislodge the English pirates with the means at their disposal and whenever there seemed a likely probability of success. If the English were dislodged from Santa Catalina without being completely destroyed, they would move on to some other undefended island, as they had done in past years, and they would return to their original fastness when the danger was past. The only entirely effective solution was to maintain a great fleet in the Caribbean, ready for instant employment wherever required. But even if such a fleet could be equipped, the demand for it to cope with the ever-increasing Dutch power in Brazil was more insistent than even the need of the Caribbean, and Philip IV's councillors had despairingly to decide that the West Indian colonies must do the best they could for themselves.

The whole of the years 1637 and 1638 were occupied in Spain in the preparation of an expedition for a supreme effort to recapture Brazil from the Dutch, and every Spanish and Portuguese vessel that could be spared was pressed into service. Special care was taken that ships, men and stores should be of the highest quality, and the fleet sailed from Lisbon in October 1638, and further reinforcements were despatched in January 1639. Only by dint of unrelenting pressure and by immense national sacrifices was it possible to get together in addition a force of seventy ships and 10,000 men to reinforce the Spanish armies in Flanders which between the French and the Dutch were threatened with destruction. While the last Hispano-Portuguese fleet of eighty-six ships and 12,000 men was on its way across the Atlantic, the Flanders expedition passed up the English Channel as the Invincible Armada had done fifty years before. But the Dutch under

Admiral Tromp were ostentatiously ready to attack, and the only way to avoid a losing battle was to seek refuge in English waters. The Spaniards fled before their enemies into the Downs and appealed to Charles I for the protection of his neutrality. But Tromp cared nothing for legality and, contemptuously disregarding the English vessels under Pennington that lay idly by, on 21 October 1639, under the eyes of the watching townsmen of Deal, he battered the Spanish vessels to utter destruction. Thousands of their crews and the soldiers they carried were drowned and the shores of Kent were littered with their corpses.

But worse was still to come. The Brazilian *armada* had been kept by adverse winds for two months idle in the harbour of Bahia, and it was not until January 1640 that battle at last was joined with the Dutch from Pernambuco. Strong southerly gales drove the fleets headlong before them in a series of running fights that defied any attempts at concerted manœuvres, but gave ample room for the exercise of the consummate Dutch seamanship that had come from years of battling with northern tempests. For four days the fight raged northward along the Brazilian coast. It was the last long-drawn close of the drama of Spain's naval power, and when it was over, with but a few remnants of her last great armada still afloat and fleeing for shelter to the guns of Bahia, the end had come. This battle of Itamaraca and that in the Downs between them had destroyed Spain's naval hopes for ever, and not for 100 years could she put another great fleet to sea. They were fought far away from the Caribbean, but they were essential events in its history. Henceforth the northern nations and especially the all-conquering Dutch had a free hand in the Indies. Spain's colonial power was not



dead, but it was driven in upon itself and shackled to the land while her oversea trade became the prize for which her victorious rivals contended between themselves with no longer a care for the fallen Colossus.

To turn back from these great and critical events in which scores of thousands had been engaged to the final scenes in the history of Providence with its few hundreds seems almost an anti-climax. But in reality they, like the greater events, were essential incidents in the drama, and they, too, had a vital influence on its next act. It was not until the summer of 1640 that the Governors of Santo Domingo and Cartagena could attempt to execute their orders against Providence with the best means at their command. In May, Don Melchior Aguilar, Governor of Cartagena, with some reinforcements who had escaped from the disaster of Itamaraca, got together a force of 800 trained soldiers and 200 negro militia and despatched them on board six frigates and a galleon to attack the Englishmen. They reached Providence at the end of the month, and a considerable force managed to land from boats. A pitched battle followed, but the Spaniards could make no headway against the block-houses and small forts with which the island was studded. They were compelled to return to their boats with great loss, and the garrison were loud in their rejoicings. No mercy was shewn to the prisoners who had been captured, but all were put to the sword, a savage act that soon brought its retribution.

The remnants of the Spaniards returned to Cartagena just as the annual fleet arrived in port under Don Francisco Diaz de Pimienta. The commander was a leader of energy and skill who at once determined to wipe out the disgrace of the defeat with an overwhelming force. He dashed back to lay the case before the

King while his ships were refitting, and he received authority to do what he could with the means at his disposal before the treasure fleet must return. Before the end of 1640 he was back again in Cartagena to prepare his plans. He made careful choice of his officers, and thoroughly trained and disciplined his soldiers, so that his force was really formidable. Public anger in Cartagena was excited against the Englishmen in Providence because of their massacre of Spanish prisoners and by reason of the rumours that they held various friars in close captivity and subjected them to many indignities. Thus religious animosities were fanned to flame in the case of the Puritan colony, while in others they were gradually dying down.

On 6 May 1641 Pimienta's expedition sailed from Cartagena with nine ships and more than 2000 men. After a close and careful reconnoitring of the dangerous channels through the reefs with the aid of a Moorish corsair who had been into the harbour with a French vessel and certain renegade Spanish pilots, at last a force of some 600 men was landed in Providence on the 24th. The Englishmen offered a strenuous resistance behind their earthworks and in the forts and citadel, but as more Spaniards were brought up the odds became so overwhelming that nothing remained but surrender. Pimienta was not only a skilful commander but also a merciful one, and when a party under a flag of truce came from the heretics to ask for terms he consented to spare their lives on condition that they delivered up all their ordnance and forts. A few Englishmen who had fled to the woods on the first Spanish landing managed to escape in boats to other islands, but more than 400 men, women and children were taken prisoners. The latter were put on board ship and sent

to England, but the men were taken to Cartagena and carried in close confinement to Spain on board the returning plate fleet. Six hundred negroes and a great quantity of gold, indigo and cochineal were among the booty, whose value amounted to close on 500,000 ducats. When the news of the victory was learned in Spain it caused great rejoicing, for it was the first notable success in the West Indies for many years. Don Francisco was rewarded with the order of the Military Knights of Santiago, and an elaborate account of the capture was published in folio in Madrid and Seville and was long remembered.

Amid the troubles that were fast carrying England into civil war the fate of a remote West Indian island could command little attention, but the tract in which it was made public is worth quoting as an illustration of the temper in which the Englishmen of the time looked at West Indian affairs. 'This unexpected and undeserved act of the Spaniard in supplanting our Nation will ere long be requited when as in cool blood the Spaniard shall do us a mischief in demolishing and ruining that which another hath built and is not able or will not make use of it himself, supplanting our more industrious people, which endeavoured to do good both to the bodies and souls of men, and only to shew his greatness with his multitude to destroy a handful and to account that a victory which is rather a credulous treachery.—But let him triumph that wins at last.' Fourteen years more were to pass before this sequel of revenge, when the revival of the 'Western Design' gave to England a greater colony in Jamaica than Providence could ever have become.

### CHAPTER XIII

#### THE HEIGHT OF DUTCH COMMERCIAL ASCENDANCY AND THE RISE OF SLAVE-GROWN SUGAR, 1640-1660

BY 1642 the political map of the West Indies had become vastly different from what it had been twenty years before, and it had reached a form that was not greatly changed for a century and a half. The mainland shores of the Caribbean were still wholly in the possession of Spain, and Vera Cruz, Puerto Bello and Cartagena were greater and busier ports than any others in West Indian waters. Hispaniola, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Jamaica were still Spanish islands, but the Lesser Antilles that had before held but a scanty population of savage Caribs had now become the homes of teeming white communities without a Spaniard among them. Tortuga was in the hands of the French. St. Christopher held both French and English, Barbados, Nevis, Montserrat and Antigua were English possessions, St. Eustatius and St. Martin's belonged to the Dutch, while Martinique and Guadeloupe were the scenes of constantly increasing French activity. The Windward Islands were still guarded from colonisation by the savage Caribs, but Curaçao, Orba and Buen Ayre off the coast of the Spanish Main had become the *entrepôts* of a vast Dutch trade. Neither the English nor the French had succeeded in establishing permanent settlements on the coast of Guiana away to the south,

and only a few Dutch planters and traders in Surinam and on the Essequibo had managed to survive.

It is impossible to arrive at accurate estimates of the number of white immigrants from the northern nations who had poured into the West Indies in twenty years, but possibly the figure may be put as high as 100,000. What is certain is that a very large proportion of those who had come in had perished, but even after constant and terrible mortality certain of the islands were packed with settlers. The contemporary estimates of their population seem almost incredible, but for what they are worth they may demand our attention, for it is undeniable that the years about 1642 saw the high-water mark of European population in the Lesser Antilles.

We have probably more information about the population of Barbados than of any other island, and there the great influx came between 1636 and 1643. In the former year there were not more than 6000 whites, but seven years later they had grown to 37,200, to decrease to 36,500 in 1645 and to 23,000 by 1655 for reasons that we shall discuss later. Richard Ligon, an English writer who knew Barbados well under the Commonwealth, put the white population in 1657 as high as 50,000, but that is almost certainly an exaggeration. The whole of the cultivable area of the island was divided up into tiny plots of from five to thirty acres, each raising tobacco or cotton by the manual labour of a few white servants. Colonel John Scott, the most detailed English historian of the West Indies in the seventeenth century, who wrote in the reign of Charles II and knew many of the surviving actors in the events he describes, may be regarded as a generally reliable witness despite the many attacks upon his accuracy. He

tells us that in 1645 there were 18,300 able-bodied men in Barbados fit to bear arms and 11,200 proprietors, which gives an average size for each holding of well under ten acres. If we take the figure of at least 36,000 for the white population, to which the weight of evidence seems to point, and divide by 166, the total number of square miles in the island, including its uncultivable peaks, we find that 217 persons must have been trying to wring a living out of each square mile, so that the island was as densely populated as many cities.

We have practically no certain information about the population at the same period in St. Christopher and Nevis, but it is clear that both islands were densely overpopulated and that the fertility of the soil was rapidly being exhausted by excessive cropping. Antigua and Montserrat, however, still afforded opportunities to their smaller population. Even less is known about the numbers of French settlers in the various colonies in their early years, but undoubtedly there was much less congestion, while the Dutch in Curaçao at any one time probably never numbered more than a thousand or two.

In both the English and the French islands tobacco-planting was the occupation of the first settlers, but by 1639 the European markets had become so glutted that the price fell alarmingly and only the very best parcels could find a sale at all. Barbados tobacco was notoriously bad, for it had an earthy taste and it could not compete with the excellent crops that were being exported by Virginia. In St. Christopher matters became so serious that in 1639 the English and the French agreed to cease planting for a year and they turned to other crops, especially cotton and indigo. But with the latter they were unsuccessful, and cotton not only could

command no ready sale but required larger plantations for its growth than the overcrowded island afforded. Under these circumstances the more enterprising of the planters, both English and French, in 1640 began to listen to the suggestions of the Dutch merchant traders that the sugar-cane would provide them with a more profitable crop. But neither in Martinique nor in Barbados, where experiments were tried at almost the same time, were they at first successful, for sugar is difficult to grow profitably and the planters were without experience. This defect, however, was supplied by the lessons learned by the Dutch in their new conquests in Brazil.

There the Portuguese had been successfully raising large crops of sugar for something over eighty years, and they had brought its cultivation and extraction to a high pitch of excellence. Under the prompting of the Dutch capitalists who by 1642 were monopolising the trade of the island, certain planters betook themselves from Barbados to Brazil to learn the proper methods at first hand. They were promised long credit by their Dutch backers and supplied on credit with the expensive copper boilers, stills and other machinery that were necessary to equip properly an *ingenio* or sugar-boiling house. They found at once that white labourers were unsuited to raising the crop, but the work could be done effectively by negro slaves under the direction of a few overseers, and these negroes the Dutchmen were anxious to supply.

At this period the Dutch slave-traders were in a very favourable position. The revolt of Portugal from Spain (1640) was followed by edicts of Philip IV forbidding all trade with the Portuguese. This meant the tearing up of the *asientos* for the supply of slaves which had been

held by Portuguese factors for so long. There were thus no slaves being sold in the Spanish colonies under royal licence, and the only source for the colonists who needed them was to purchase the blacks from the Dutch contraband traders. Thus Spanish, English and French alike were in the hands of the Dutch slave-traders at the height of the ascendancy.

In 1640 there were not more than a few hundred negroes in Barbados and those had been purchased at comparatively low cost. But after 1643, as the demand for slaves for the new sugar plantations increased rapidly and prices rose in proportion, the planters had to avail themselves of the long credit offered by the Dutch slavers. By 1645 there were nearly 6000 negro slaves in the island, and five or six years later that number had risen to more than 20,000. The result was an extraordinary and striking social change. Where there had been a multitude of tiny holdings cultivated by small planters with but a few white labourers apiece, now the more astute and energetic owners had bought out their neighbours either with their own or borrowed capital, and had turned their indentured servants adrift, to replace them with wild, untamed negroes from the heart of darkest Africa. The sufferings of the displaced white men must have been terrible, but the few writers of the period pass them by almost in silence. We can only faintly hear their echoes in England and Scotland, where the most terrible fate for the prisoners captured in the Civil War was transportation to 'the Barbadoes'. Twenty years before the West Indies had been the goal of hopeful immigrants; they were now the dreaded haunt of evil and savage cruelty.

Those who survived as planters on their own account or as managers and overseers for absentee proprietors



made wealth rapidly. The land passed into the hands of a comparatively small group of magnates and the small planting class of the earlier period was mostly dispossessed. The landless men wandered away to join the buccaneers or search for new homes in unoccupied islands. Barbados became for many years a fertile recruiting-ground for colonising expeditions to other parts of the West Indies, and in a sense she may be said to have been the mother colony of our Caribbean possessions, much more so than St. Christopher, though similar conditions there gave rise to a similar exodus on a smaller scale. Of the 12,000 men who are said to have left Barbados in ten years, only 2000 or 3000 reached a safe haven in the mainland colonies, and most of the rest perished. Only a remnant survived to furnish a nucleus of seasoned colonists for England's new settlement in Jamaica after 1655.

The time of wanderings was filled with obscure struggles that have left little trace in history. English, French and Dutch alike were striving to occupy the islands that were still unsettled, and Norwegians, Swedes and Danes were coming in to join them in the struggle. We hear of a party of intruding Englishmen being massacred wholesale by Zeelanders in Santa Cruz, and then of others who were so oppressed by the Dutch and the French that they banded together to expel them. The parties who came from St. Christopher to occupy Barbuda and Marie Galante were destroyed again and again by raiding Caribs, while the Irishmen and Norwegians who went from Antigua to settle in St. Bartholomew fell out and destroyed one another. Such a scene of turmoil defies exact narration and only a confused general impression remains. It is that of a struggle for life which was almost ant-like in its intensity, wherein

only good luck, good health and complete lack of squeamishness could ensure survival.

At this period the population of the French islands was very much less than that of the English, probably amounting in 1642 to not more than 7000 whites. The change-over to sugar was therefore accomplished with less difficulty than in the English colonies, but it was more gradual. Only a few of the larger planters embarked upon sugar-planting before 1650, and the average colonist continued to raise tobacco. The first really successful French sugar-planter was the *Sieur de Houel*, who was appointed Governor of Guadeloupe in 1646, with the direct purpose of enabling him to carry out experiments which he was ready to finance from his own resources. His initiative was richly rewarded, for before the middle of the 'fifties his islands were exporting large and valuable cargoes of sugar. But the success of individual planters did nothing to save the Company of the Isles of America from ruin, for practically the whole of the produce of the islands went to Dutch merchants in Middelburg who financed the planters who wished to begin sugar-planting. It was they who gathered the produce into their store-houses in every French island and sold manufactured goods and supplies of all kinds to the colonists at prices with which French importers could not compete. The colonies seemed in fact to be merely annexes of the Dutch Empire.

The Company of the Isles of America was tumbling to ruin, and its bankruptcy in 1648 led to the sale of the islands to individual proprietors, thus imitating the system that prevailed in the English West Indies at the beginning. Guadeloupe, Marie Galante and Désirade were bought by Houel in 1649, Martinique, St. Lucia and Grenada by their governor, the *Sieur du Parquet*,

and St. Christopher by the Knights of Malta in 1651. The proprietary régime lasted in full swing down to the introduction of Colbert's great reforms in 1664, and it was the lack of any government interference to prevent the lords proprietors from pursuing their own selfish interests that gave the Dutch such a great commercial hold.

The circumstances of the time were peculiarly propitious for their monopoly, for neither in England nor in France was there a strong government capable of compelling the colonists to abide by trade regulations in the national interest. The colonies were for the time being practically independent of all outside control and could buy and sell where they found it easiest. Again, as we have said, only the Dutch could supply the negroes they were needing in ever-increasing quantity. Between 1637 and 1642 the Netherlanders captured all the Portuguese posts on the African coast from Arguin in the far north down to St. Paul de Loanda, the capital of Angola. From St. George d'Elmina, Cape Coast Castle and Axim they dominated the Gold Coast against all other white men, and they came near to establishing a complete monopoly in slaves. Thus they alone could furnish English and French planters with the labour supply demanded by the new culture, and all the profits from temporarily enhanced prices went into their pockets. As to the supplies for the Spanish Main, the *asientos* were completely in abeyance from 1647 to 1660 owing to the rancour with which the Spanish government persisted in the ostracism of the Portuguese and the impossibility of finding any Spaniards with sufficient experience and resources to trade for themselves in West Africa.

But the boom time of the Netherlanders did not last

long, for the independence of Portugal, that had at first been welcomed as giving them a new ally against Spain, proved in the end to be the cause of the Dutch West India Company's downfall. The Company had exhausted its financial resources by over-ambitious management when the outraged religious feelings of the Brazilian colonists and their newly revived patriotism roused them to a new struggle for the expulsion of the invaders. By 1648 almost every vestige of Dutch power had been driven out of Brazil and only the city of Pernambuco remained in their hands for six years more. The great venture had therefore ended in disastrous defeat, leaving the West India Company practically bankrupt with all its capital lost. In Africa, too, the Dutch could not retain their conquests long against the attacks of the inspirited Portuguese. São Thomé, the island base of the slave-trade, was recaptured, and many of the slavers returned to their former factories on the Gold Coast before 1654 with arrangements to supply their slaves to the English West Indies direct without Dutch intervention.

The long-drawn-out war with Spain had become hateful to everyone in the Netherlands but the directors of the East and West India Companies when at last in 1646 it became possible to open serious negotiations for a general peace. But the influence of both companies was waning and they found it impossible to prevent the negotiations or to compel the Spaniards to agree to freedom of trade with their American possessions. For two years the parleys dragged on at Münster in Westphalia, and when at last the definitive Peace of Münster was signed in January 1648, it contained none of the provisions on which the West India Company had insisted.

In regard to extra-European affairs the treaty went no further than the truce of 1609 had done. Despite all the disasters she had suffered and the terrible depths of exhaustion to which she had been reduced, Spain would not recede from her irrevocable determination to reserve all the trade of her colonies for herself. Each of the signatory powers was permitted to retain the places and territories of which it was in actual occupation both in the West and the East Indies, and the uninterrupted access of the subjects of each power to its own territories was assured. Thus Curaçao and St. Eustatius passed legally into Dutch sovereignty. The provision for free access brought to an end the authorisation of commissioned privateering by the West India Company, while another article, forbidding the subjects of each power to trade with any of the territories belonging to the other, prevented the old contraband trade from being carried on openly in Dutch ports and it had to pass into the hands of private merchants.

These blows were so severe that the West India Company never recovered from them. Brazil, which had swallowed up such vast sums, was irrevocably lost, and the remaining bits of Dutch monopoly in Africa and the West Indies were the prey of new enemies, as we shall see. For a few years the Company lingered on, until in 1674 the English wars had had their fatal effect and it was finally bankrupt. During its later years almost its only source of continuing profit was the slave-trade, which we shall consider further in a later chapter.

After the Peace of Westphalia, in fact, the Netherlands and their trade became the main objects of the jealousy of the other maritime nations in the Caribbean and a new era of struggle began. In its first phase England and France strove successfully to eject the

Dutch from the trade of their island colonies, and in the second they turned to compete with them for the trade of the Spanish Indies. But in neither phase were the movements entirely clear, for they were cut across by the traditional enmity against the Spaniards and the gradual rise of the Anglo-French rivalry that after 1689 was to become the dominant factor in Caribbean history. The period between 1648 and 1689 was thus one of transition in West Indian affairs from the politics of the Elizabethan and early Stuart age to those of the eighteenth century, and it saw the gradual clearance from the stage of the lumber of outworn policies and its setting for a new drama of mercantile rivalry.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CROMWELL AND THE WESTERN DESIGN, 1649-1660

DURING the six years of fighting between the armies of Charles I and the Parliament (1642-48) the English West Indian colonies did their best to maintain their neutrality and merely made use of the struggle to serve their own ends. They strove to release themselves from all their obligations to the lords proprietors and to develop their independent trade with the markets in which they could find most profit, those of Middelburg and Flushing. But many fugitive royalists found their way to the islands when their cause was lost in England, and by 1648 some of them had become so influential in Barbados at least that they were in a position to break up the convention of neutrality and to attempt to make the islands a base from which to launch a new royalist campaign. By May 1650 these extreme royalists had succeeded in getting the government of Barbados into their hands and proclaiming Charles II as king, which meant complete defiance of the party in power in England. They were about to proceed to more drastic measures and to expel all sympathisers with the Parliament from the island when their plans were upset by the arrival of Francis, Lord Willoughby of Parham, with a commission from Charles II and the lord proprietor, appointing him as governor-in-chief of all the English Caribbee Islands. Willoughby was a moder-

ate of great ability and tact who, having fought for the Parliamentarians during the war, had been driven to change sides by their arbitrary and revengeful measures. He believed that the only hope for the continuing prosperity of the islands lay in a policy of moderation and the stilling and avoidance of faction. He tried to get the planters of St. Christopher, Nevis and Antigua to acknowledge his authority but failed, for the former islands were determined to preserve their neutrality and the Antiguanus were fanatical royalists who would not acknowledge Willoughby because of his former adherence to the Parliamentary cause.

Willoughby met with no better success in his overtures to the Council of State in England. The adhesion of Barbados to the cause of Charles II afforded an opportunity to the London merchants to put a stop to the trade of the Dutch who had supplanted them in the commerce of the island, and they were not slow to avail themselves of it. They brought to bear all the pressure they could exercise on the Council of State to secure an embargo on the trade of the Caribbee Islands and the despatch of a naval expedition to bring the royalists there into subjection. Cromwell was not unwilling to agree to these measures, for he fully realised the dangers that might arise if the English West Indies should afford a haven of refuge for Prince Rupert and his royalist privateers.

In October 1650 a drastic Act of great importance was passed that prohibited all 'trade and commerce to Barbados, Antigua, Virginia and the Somers Islands, because of their rebellion against the Commonwealth and Government of England'. All the naval commanders at sea were commanded to seize the ships of any nation endeavouring to carry on trade with the recalcitrant



colonies, and the fleet in the Downs was ordered to stop ten or twelve Dutch ships from Middelburg and Flushing that were sailing to Barbados, an order that indicated clearly that the Commonwealth was aiming not only at the royalists but at the Dutch predominance in the trade of the English West Indies. Meanwhile the Barbadians under Willoughby's leadership had openly proclaimed their independence and their determination to continue to trade with their Dutch patrons. Such a declaration was a flagrant act of rebellion against the supreme authority in England, and must be suppressed by force. But nearly a year elapsed before the Council could spare any ships for the task, and Sir George Ayscue did not sail until 1651. As soon as he arrived off the shores of Barbados with his squadron of two warships and four armed merchantmen he proceeded to seize the Dutch merchantmen that he found trading in Carlisle Bay. He was not strong enough to attack the strong land forces defending the island, but he began a close blockade while he diplomatically tried to encourage those of the colonists who wished to come to terms. His efforts were successful, and at length in February 1652 Barbados surrendered and Lord Willoughby was forced to flee. He passed over to the wild coast of Guiana to begin a new colony on the Surinam with a considerable measure of success.

The Articles of Surrender provided for the complete submission of the colonists to the authority of the Commonwealth, and thus their acceptance of the restrictions imposed by the new Navigation Ordinances upon their previously complete licence to trade with whom they would. This was probably in the long run the most significant result of the surrender, for even if the English embargo upon the trade with foreigners were as

yet only enforceable when Commonwealth ships were in colonial waters, it was clearly only a matter of time until it should be completely effective. The Dutch were fully conscious of the menace that was threatening one of their most profitable markets, and they had already attempted to avert it by negotiation. At The Hague in June 1651 they proposed to the English envoys that there should be reciprocal freedom of trade with all the English and Dutch possessions in Virginia and the Caribbee Islands, and that no distinction should be made between the citizens of either republic in this respect. But no sooner had these first negotiations broken down than the Commonwealth, under the influence of its merchant advisers, marked its determination to proceed with its restrictive policy by the passing of the Navigation Ordinance of October 1651, whose purpose was unmistakable.

It was enacted in terms that were to form the basis of the English colonial system for nearly two centuries, but in 1651 could only be aimed at the power that had almost a monopoly of the maritime trade of the world. The products of Asia, Africa and America might hereafter be imported into England, her colonies or dependencies only in English or colonial ships of which the master and a majority of the crew were of English nationality. European products might be exported thither only in ships belonging to England or her colonies or to the countries where the goods were produced. Foreign goods could only be shipped from the places of their production or from their usual port of first shipment, save in the case of the colonial products of Spain and Portugal, which might be brought from the ports of those countries respectively.

When the envoys of the United Provinces reopened

the negotiations early in 1652 and appealed to the Council of State for the suspension of the Ordinance, they met with a direct refusal, and the terms of the answer left no room for doubt that England was irrevocably determined to reserve her colonial trade for her own citizens. 'The people of the Commonwealth of England having been always strictly forbidden trade in all plantations and places belonging to the people of the United Provinces that are not within the Netherlands: We shall acquiesce therein and shall therefore forbear to sail or trade with any of their plantations abroad; and shall not disturb them in their sailing to them. And as for their trading to any of the English plantations, it is forbidden by the late increase of the navigation of this nation, *from which we think not fit to recede*'.

With the break-down of the second negotiations the two nations were not far from the brink of war, and though many causes of purely European origin and far removed from colonial affairs had contributed to bring them into that position so that the ensuing struggle cannot fairly be attributed to the Navigation Act alone, there is no doubt that 1652 is the critical date of the turning of the ways. Two Protestant powers that had been for eighty years in close alliance in the cause of the reformed religion had broken over matters of commerce and maritime power, and thenceforth such affairs were to play an ever more preponderant part in governing the alignment of the western nations. The era of wars of religion was over; that of the wars for commerce and colonial power was beginning, wherein the West Indies filled a high place among the most coveted prizes.

The fighting of the first Dutch war was almost entirely confined to European waters, and in the Carib-

bean there was generally a tacit understanding between the Dutch and English to preserve neutrality and to continue the pursuit of their own local interests. Prince Rupert, who had made his dash across the Atlantic four months after the surrender of Barbados to Ayscue, could find no succour either from the English or the Dutch and had to depend upon what slight assistance he could get from individual colonists in the French islands. His ships suffered terribly in a fierce hurricane in the late autumn of 1652 in which his brother, Prince Maurice, foundered with all his crew, and at last, early in 1653, Rupert had to return to European waters with but a fragment of his squadron without having effected anything of the purposes of his raid.

The effect of the war upon the West Indies was of great indirect importance, for it broke the commercial links that bound the English and French planters to the Dutch merchants and traders. With English cruisers scouring the Channel and the North Sea it was impossible for Dutch merchant vessels to continue their old trade with anything approaching regularity, and the way lay open for the English merchants to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded them by the Navigation Ordinance. Sugar cargoes began to pour into the London warehouses, and English manufactures were carried into the islands in a steadily increasing stream. The planters who had sought loans in Middelburg or France now found their backing in London and the channels of trade were permanently diverted. It was commercial pressure that ultimately compelled the States to sue for peace, and for the first time the effects of the strangle-hold that maritime power can exert upon a mercantile nation were exhibited fully in international affairs.

Negotiations for a settlement were tried again and again during the course of the war, but they always broke down upon the Dutch demands for liberty of commerce with the English possessions oversea, and their main interest lies in an extraordinary proposal that was put forward by Cromwell which indicates the direction in which his mind was trending towards a world policy wherein the Indies occupied a foremost place. As foreshadowing the 'Western Design' of a couple of years later, the proposition is of direct interest though nothing came of it. England and the United Provinces were to enter into a perpetual alliance—offensive as well as defensive—against their common enemies. They were to partition between them the world beyond the limits of Europe. The whole of Asia was to fall to the Dutch, who were to compensate the English East India Company for its exclusion. America, on the other hand, was to be assigned to the English with the exception of Brazil, and the Dutch were to furnish armies and fleets to aid in the complete conquest of the Spanish Indies. The dominant motive of the Elizabethan adventurers was thus to govern the policy of the two nations and to command an exertion of effort that was stupendous in its magnitude. So staggering was this grandiose scheme that it was not listened to for a moment by the realist Dutch, but we must note it as indicative of the ambitions of the all-powerful Protector who first conceived of English aggrandisement on a world scale and saw the Indies as the centre of his plan.

Though the Dutch would not join him in his vast designs, it was essential to bring the war with them to a close before embarking upon new commitments. In the treaty concluded at Westminster in April 1654 there was nothing more agreed upon than the restoration

of amicable relations and the mutual recognition of possessions as held at the date of the treaty. But the treaty was in effect a Dutch acknowledgement of defeat, for by its essential 12th article, which provided for the restoration of commercial relations, they agreed to abide by the regulations imposed by England. Commerce could in future only be carried on by either side, 'saving all the laws and ordinances of either commonwealth respectively'. Among those ordinances were of course included the essential Navigation Ordinances of 1650 and 1651, and thus the Dutch were compelled to acquiesce in their exclusion from the trade with the English colonies and the serious limitation of their commercial opportunities that that involved. The peace was welcomed in England as a relief from the burdens and anxieties of war and in Holland as an accomplishment of an absolute necessity. But Zeeland, the home of the Dutch West India Company, knew that it meant the downfall of her prosperity, and nothing but the exhaustion produced by the commercial blockade compelled her reluctant acquiescence.

As soon as the Dutch settlement had been ratified the way lay open for a decision upon wider questions of policy, and Cromwell, now endowed with 'almost absolute power as Lord Protector, found himself faced with a dilemma of the gravest difficulty. It was surrounded with European questions at issue that do not concern us, but essentially it centred upon the problem of national aggrandisement. It raised in a new form the question of alliance with or against Spain that dated back to the reign of Henry VIII, and had been the constant preoccupation of Elizabeth and James I. Could the recognition of our new colonies in the Caribbean and a share of the trade of the Spanish Indies be obtained

best by alliance or by war? Should the pro-Spanish policy of James I be revived or that of Elizabeth in her later years? Such were the questions presenting themselves to Cromwell in the summer of 1654, and he found it hard to resolve them.

If we look only at what was known to the general public, it might seem that he proceeded straightforward to accomplish the vast plans of national aggrandisement at Spain's expense that he had proposed to the Dutch in 1653, but in reality the matter was infinitely more complex. All through the last months of the peace parleys with the Dutch Cromwell was hesitatingly engaged in a tortuous double negotiation wherein he was trying to egg on Mazarin and Philip IV to outbid one another for his alliance by subsidies and commercial privileges. The members of his Council were sharply divided in opinion, and first one and then the other policy prevailed with the vacillating Protector himself. At first those who feared the danger of French assistance to the exiled Stuarts were in the ascendant, and an actual offer of offensive and defensive alliance was made to Philip IV in return for a large and immediate annual subsidy. But even while this proposal was on its way to Spain, the opposite party in the Council was successfully insisting that an attack upon the Spaniards in the Indies would be the most profitable enterprise in the world, and that with 160 ships of the English navy now freshly released from the Dutch war and at a higher pitch of efficiency than ever before such an enterprise would easily command success. For a moment Cromwell was convinced and thought that all that remained was to screw the highest price out of France. But his demands were so coolly received that he turned once more to the other side and again offered his alliance to

the Spaniards on heavier terms than before. However, while the Spaniards were considering their answer there was another change of front, and this time a decision of vital future importance was reached.

Cromwell fell in with the opinion of the majority of his Council and determined to launch a surprise attack in force against the Indies which, like most Englishmen brought up in the Elizabethan tradition, he looked upon as affording inexhaustible opportunities of plunder. He does not appear to have realised that such a raid must break off amicable relations, but seems to have hoped to repeat the strange situation of the early years of Elizabeth's reign and to remain at peace with Spain in Europe while war raged 'beyond the line'. But what had been possible in the sixteenth was not so easy in the closer-knit world of the seventeenth century, and inevitably the decision upon a West Indian attack with the English navy meant that sooner or later the Protector must range himself alongside France in her war with Spain.

The nation at large was utterly ignorant of the tortuous negotiations that had been going on, but Cromwell knew that his anti-Spanish designs would be popular with all Englishmen save the merchants engaged in trade with the Peninsula, and this may have encouraged his decision. Though in June 1654 it had been fully decided to despatch a fleet carrying a large land force upon the 'Western Design', it was quite uncertain to all but the few in the secret what that design might be. The preparations were already far advanced when early in August the Protector summoned the Spanish ambassador to an interview and told him that England's friendship for Spain was contingent upon the granting of two conditions—complete liberty of conscience for



all Englishmen in the Spanish dominions and freedom of trade with the West Indies, which, as the ambassador told him, was impossible, for it was to demand of the King of Spain his two eyes. This reply, which must have been expected, ended Cromwell's hesitation, and at last in the middle of August he fixed upon Admiral Penn and General Venables as leaders of the expedition and ordered them to concert plans for an attack upon the Spanish possessions in the West Indies, but still in complete secrecy.

The greatest English historian of the Stuart period, S. R. Gardiner, points to this momentous decision as the critical turning-point in English policy. It was 'the beginning of the prolonged effort by which England's empire beyond the seas was built up. The scattered colonies, the few West India islands exposed to Spanish attack, and the few settlements along the Atlantic coast of the mainland were to be bound together in a wider dominion by the acquisition of a mastery of the seas reaching far beyond that sovereignty hitherto claimed over the waters encircling our own island'. Henceforth the eyes of English statesmen were turned away from their earlier aims of extending Protestantism to the material side of the international conflict, and the extension of England's control of the sea which would bring more of the fertile islands of the west beneath her sway became for a century and a half one of their constant preoccupations.

In the preparation of the instructions for the commanders of the expedition to carry out the 'Western Design' during the autumn of 1654 the Protector was advised by two men who knew the West Indies well but were unduly optimistic in their predictions. Thomas Gage, 'the English American' as he was known, had

spent many years in Central America as a parish priest of the Dominican Order, but he had abandoned his faith and, returning to England, became an active agent of the Puritans in their persecution of Roman Catholics. In 1648 he published the first connected account in English of the Spanish Indies from within, and pointed to their weakness and vulnerability to English attack. Gage was an untrustworthy guide, for he promised that it would be possible to conquer the mainland of Central America within a couple of years; but his violent partisanship made him a useful popular advocate, and in 1655 the Council promoted the issue of a second edition of his book. Colonel Thomas Modyford was a much shrewder and more reliable adviser, who had had much experience in Barbados and was one of the moderate leaders there. Gage suggested the conquest of Hispaniola or Cuba as the first step, but Modyford pointed rather to Trinidad and the region round the mouth of the Orinoco. It lay far to the windward of all the Spanish colonies and so could only be attacked direct from Spain, but it would form an excellent advanced base for the conquest of Cartagena, and Modyford thus anticipated some of the strategic designs of British commanders in the eighteenth century. In the instructions issued to the commanders they were directed to make their own choice of the best plan by which to gain an interest in that part of the West Indies in possession of the Spaniards. They might seize Hispaniola or Puerto Rico first and pass thence to an attack on Cartagena or Havana, or they might land at any point between the mouth of the Orinoco and Puerto Bello where a favourable chance was offered.

The final preparations for the expedition were made with great haste and culpable neglect of necessary pre-

cautions. The ships were well provided with disciplined crews, but the land army of 2500 men was little more than a disorderly mob made up of rejected men from the English regiments supplemented by vagabonds forcibly recruited from the London slums. Less than half were trained soldiers who had ever borne arms, and no opportunity was afforded for their organisation and training before they were put aboard ship in December 1654. It was intended to supplement the force sent out from England by recruits obtained from the superfluous population of Barbados and other islands, but their quality was even worse. Some 1200 men obtained in February and March 1655 from St. Christopher, Nevis and Montserrat were of fair quality and had some useful knowledge of West Indian conditions, but the larger numbers, amounting to between 3000 and 4000 recruited in Barbados, were the off-scourings of the plantation. They were, as Venables wrote, 'not to be commanded as soldiers, nor to be kept in any civil order, being the most profane, debauched persons that we ever saw, scorers of religion; and indeed, men kept so loose as not to be kept under discipline, and so cowardly as not to be made to fight'. Nothing could point more clearly to the deteriorating effect of a tropical climate upon white colonists than the character of these unfortunate Barbadian derelicts, and it is a terrible commentary on the sad results of more than twenty years of English emigration to the West Indies which were discussed in our previous chapter.

By the beginning of April, when it had been determined to make the city of Santo Domingo the first objective, the nominal force had been swelled to 9000 men, but stores and equipment were alike defective and there were already violent quarrels among the

officers and incipient mutinies among the men. With such drawbacks success would have seemed doubtful to any save those who had been brought up on tales of Spanish weakness and incompetence, but a rude awakening was awaiting them.

The landing force disembarked on 14 April without opposition at a point nearly thirty miles' march from the city and, without waiting to consolidate their position or to organise proper supplies, a helter-skelter advance began. There were few Spaniards to oppose the march and, save for some guerilla attacks by lightly armed parties of cow-killers who dashed out of the woods to run down the stragglers with their long lances, there was little fighting. But heat and thirst, hunger, dysentery and fever within a few days reduced the spirits of the whole army so low that they were incapable of defending themselves let alone attacking the forts and walls of Santo Domingo when they came to them at last. A sudden attack by a body of Spanish lancers threw the mob into helpless panic, and if it had not been for a stand by a party of sailors who had been landed, the affair would have ended in a wholesale massacre of the cowed fugitives fleeing back to their boats in hopeless confusion. By the 28th it was all over, the remnants were all back at the landing-place to wait in helpless misery and terror until they could be re-embarked. An English army had suffered the most disgraceful defeat in West Indian history owing far more to its own misbehaviour and cowardice than any efforts of the enemy, and only the sailors had done anything to redeem the shameful story.

The ships with the survivors aboard sailed from the coast of Hispaniola on 4 May with the aim of attacking the neighbouring island of Jamaica to have something

at least to show for its efforts. In the eyes of everyone this was an abject confession of failure, for Jamaica only twelve years before had been held to ransom by a single English privateer, Captain William Jackson, with but a few hundred men. The island did not contain more than some 1500 Spaniards in all engaged in cattle-keeping, and of them there were only about 500 capable of bearing arms. On 10 May the English fleet arrived in what is now the harbour of Kingston, and the landing was made without resistance. It was impossible for the few Spaniards to oppose the invaders, and most of them retired into the hills of the interior with their families and what valuables they could take away. Only a handful remained to receive the harsh terms of immediate evacuation imposed by General Venables, and the Spanish government at a later date claimed that there was no person of authority among them and that their pretended surrender of the island was worthless. However, as soon as a beginning had been made with the occupation both Penn and Venables turned over their commands to their juniors and returned to England to face the wrath of the Protector, while the officers who were left behind had to do the best they could to put Jamaica into a state of defence against the Spanish attack which could not fail to be launched upon them.

While things were thus running their course in Hispaniola and Jamaica, England and Spain were gradually moving nearer to the inevitable general war in Europe. Before he knew certainly that the 'Western Design' was directed against the Indies Philip IV made a last attempt to come to terms, but his special ambassador could obtain nothing from the Protector but a re-iteration of his impossible demands for freedom of commerce with the Spanish colonies, and when in July

1655 the news reached Europe of the English seizure of Jamaica it was impossible to get Cromwell to consent to its restitution. But matters dragged on until the end of October before the Spanish ambassador left England and the breach was complete.

A day or two after his departure Cromwell issued a public manifesto reciting the wrongs suffered by Englishmen at the hands of Spain which was largely devoted to the West Indies and affords a revealing résumé of the opinions on the Caribbean held by the average Englishman of the time to whom it was directed. The Declaration is in a sense a summary of West Indian history for the previous thirty years viewed from the English side, and it is of interest to us as a recapitulation of the events with which we have been concerned.

The final breach with Spain brought with it a favourable end to the long negotiations with France, and in November 1655 an offensive and defensive treaty of alliance was signed at Westminster. This put an end to the desultory privateering warfare that had taken toll of the merchant ships of each nation for some years, but it had little effect in the West Indies, for there the English and the French colonists had had a tacit agreement to leave each other alone. Joint action against the Spaniards was confined to Europe, and the English were left to defend their new conquest by their own arms. Cromwell was firmly resolved that Jamaica should be held permanently as a base for further operations when the times should be more propitious, and that necessarily meant its peopling with English colonists. Reinforcements had been sent out to the West Indies even before the news of the Hispaniola fiasco was received, and in the autumn of 1655 as many soldiers as could be spared were sent to Jamaica. But neither commanders nor men

knew or cared anything about the sanitary precautions that are essential in the tropics, and the troops died off at an alarming rate from dysentery and yellow fever, so that in the other English islands Jamaica acquired an evil reputation for unhealthiness.

This prevented colonists of good quality being recruited in Barbados or St. Christopher, the most evidently suitable places from which to obtain immigrants. Only a few thousand settlers who were the off-scourings of the colonies could be persuaded to migrate, and they were so unsatisfactory that they added greatly to the disorder and distress in the new settlements. The government had therefore to look elsewhere and considered various suggestions. Serious efforts were made to attract settlers from New England but without much success. A proposal to transport 1000 boys and girls from Ireland was not carried out, but many reprieved prisoners from the London gaols and vagrants and outlaws from the country districts were shipped over by contractors among the London merchants, who were granted large areas of land in return. With such refractory material it was impossible to build up an orderly colony, and for the first four or five years of England's occupation of Jamaica it saw a repetition of all the worst troubles that had been suffered in the early days of Barbados.

The regular operations of the maritime war against Spain were mostly confined to European waters, and the fleet under Admiral Blake caused great distress by his blockade of the Spanish coast and in the Western Mediterranean. But in the Caribbean operations were mostly entrusted to privateers acting in concert with the buccaneers, whose ravages we shall discuss later. After Penn's departure for England the command of

the regular fleet in the West Indies devolved on Vice-Admiral Goodson, and in the autumn of 1655 he cruised against Spanish shipping along the coast of the Main. He took and sacked Santa Marta and Rio de la Hacha, but his booty was negligible, for everything of value had been removed into the interior. In the summer of 1656 he cruised off the entrance to the Florida Passage to intercept the treasure galleons on their way to Havana. The ships from Puerto Bello escaped him and had left Havana for Spain before he arrived off the port, but the Mexico fleet, knowing of their danger, did not sail but remained in harbour at Vera Cruz to await a clear passage. When the galleons arrived off Cadiz they had to run the gauntlet of Blake's blockading fleet, and though some of them managed to reach port, the flagship fell into English hands with over 2,000,000 pesos aboard, while two other vessels with another 1,600,000 pesos were burned and sunk. The loss was a serious blow to the Spanish government, which was more dependent than ever upon the incoming bullion to pay its fleets and armies. Spanish credit upon the money markets of Italy depended upon the regular payment of interest on its vast loans, and when that failed it was impossible to raise further money.

The *flota* which had wintered in New Spain found its way safe across the Atlantic as far as the Canaries in February 1657, but there it was heard that Blake was lying in wait, and the cargoes of treasure amounting to 10,500,000 pesos were landed and carried for safety into the hills of Teneriffe. The galleons remained at anchor under the guns of the forts of Santa Cruz, and there on 20 April Blake found them and determined to attack. The vigour and boldness of his onslaught on heavily armed vessels lying under the shelter of power-



ful forts were amply justified by the results, for before sundown the whole of the Spanish fleet was burned or sunk, and the English got out again with comparatively small loss. This was the most brilliant action of the Commonwealth navy and Blake's victory at Santa Cruz had a profound effect upon the international situation. Though the treasure had not been captured, it was inaccessible in the Teneriffe hills and no fleet remained either to convoy it to Spain or to transport to the colonies the manufactured goods they needed. Prices in America therefore rose very greatly in 1658, and the illicit traders, among whom English merchants were now competing with the Dutch, made large profits.

After Santa Cruz there was no hope of sending out the promised fleet from Spain for the recapture of Jamaica, and the Governors of Cuba and Hispaniola were warned that they must do what they could with locally raised forces. In the summer of 1657 two parties of Spaniards of about 500 each coming from Cuba landed upon the north coast of Jamaica and attempted to fortify themselves. They were vigorously attacked by Colonel Edward D'Oyley, the new governor, and though his troops were very badly off for clothes, shoes and equipment, the Spanish invaders were completely defeated and scattered into the woods, where they were hunted down by the maroons or negro slaves who had escaped in earlier years from their masters and who would shew no mercy to a Spaniard. The following year there was another organised attack in considerable force, but again D'Oyley was successful in overcoming it and his victories did much to restore the morale of the English in Jamaica and to wipe out the stain upon our arms left by the disgrace at Santo Domingo.

When the Protector died on 3 September 1658,

Jamaica had passed the worst of its early troubles and the island had started on its way to become the most important English colony in the West Indies. No further Spanish attack on our colonies in the Caribbean on a large scale need be feared, but it was to events far from the Indies that the removal of the traditional menace was due. Until 1657 Philip IV had maintained his losing battle with the rapidly rising power of France and England with difficulty but with some successes. With the opening of the campaign of 1658 the results of Blake's naval victories and his unrelenting blockade shewed their full effect, for the deterioration of the unpaid Spanish soldiery was such as to place the opportunity of overwhelming victory in the hands of their enemies. At the battle of the Dunes before Dunkirk (June 1658), Turenne, at the head of a joint French and English army, inflicted the final defeat that revealed Spain's utter downfall from the position that she had held as the most dreaded world power for more than a century. Six months later she was seeking for peace on any terms she could obtain, and when in November 1659 she was compelled to sign the humiliating Treaty of the Pyrenees, it was clear to all that her sun had set. The great Protector did not live to see the final victory, and it was the restored Stuart dynasty that reaped its fruits, but it was his genius that had raised England to her place among those who were to benefit by the spoils of the fallen Colossus. Her share was to be at sea and in the sphere of colonial power, and though his 'Western Design' had yielded nothing but a single new colony, it was among the foundation stones of the English empire of the sea wherein for more than a century the colonies in the West Indies were to fill a central place.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE BUCCANEERS AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY, 1660-1665

WITH the Treaty of the Pyrenees and the restoration of the Stuarts to the English throne another chapter begins in the tangled story of West Indian history which for ten years becomes more complicated than ever before. The period is marked by special features, for it saw the rapid consolidation of the English and French colonies, largely at the expense of Dutch commerce, and the beginnings of the rivalry of England and France for the trade of the Spanish Indies which will much concern us because of its reflex action on the fortunes of the islands. It is also notable for the influence of bands of piratical outlaws, buccaneers or *flibustiers* upon international politics, a unique phenomenon that is unmatched in any modern period of history. The first seven years down to the Peace of Breda (1660-67) were crowded with events in European politics and in the Caribbean that were undoubtedly interconnected but were also associated with confused and sometimes apparently capricious changes of policy through which it is difficult to trace a connected thread. In reality the rival nations were engaged in an intricate game of manœuvring for advantageous positions in the new struggle that was beginning in the field of commerce and colonial dominion. The protagonists who had filled the centre of the stage for so long were sinking

rapidly from the first to the second rank while their rivals were struggling to aggrandise themselves from the spoils of their heritage. The seven years were in fact a time of change wherein the last convulsive movements of the old struggle between Spain and the Dutch were stilled while England and France were seeking allies and weapons for the new conflict. It was not until 1689 that the battle was fairly joined, but in the colonial sphere the contestants were definitely ranged against one another earlier than in Europe. The critical date was 1667, for after the Peace of Breda the course of policy began to straighten out and one is enabled to discern more clearly the essential factor of the period, the emergence of the Anglo-French rivalry that was to dominate colonial history for more than a century.

Charles II had been in close relations with Philip IV during the later years of his exile, and his restoration automatically brought the Cromwellian war with Spain to a close, but there was no permanent restoration of amicable intercourse. The mercantile party that had been so influential under the Protectorate maintained their control over commercial and colonial policy in the King's council, and they were determined to persist in their anti-Spanish designs. The Spaniards strove hard to weaken England's support of the Braganza dynasty in Portugal, but Charles II quoted as his price admission to a share in the Indies trade, though he refused to listen to any proposals for the restoration of Jamaica, and on those terms no bargain was possible. Thus England was driven to renew and strengthen her alliance with Portugal and to lend assistance against the Spanish armies that were striving to invade her. The friction that arose from Charles II's whole-hearted acceptance of the restrictive regulations of the Navigation Ordin-

ances tended to force policy in the same direction, for the Dutch were the unrelenting enemies of the Portuguese at sea and our support of them was bound to increase Anglo-Dutch rivalry. At the same time, Louis XIV did what he could to favour an Anglo-Portuguese alliance so as to keep a weapon in hand against Spain, and it was largely through his prompting that the marriage of Charles to Catherine of Braganza was arranged, which was to have important consequences in the East Indies and in Africa.

As was mentioned earlier, the Dutch West India Company about 1637 succeeded in capturing practically every Portuguese slave-trading post of importance in West Africa, from Goree at the mouth of the Senegal down to St. Paul de Loanda in Angola. They aimed, as we have shown, at establishing an exclusive monopoly of the slave-trade in place of the Portuguese, and for a time they met with great success. In the first place they wished to supply their new conquests in Brazil with cheap labour, but the revival of national energy in Portugal after the revolt from Spain in 1640, which brought about the conquest of Brazil in five or six years, put a stop to this. They also designed to win for themselves the trade of supplying negroes to the Spanish colonies, a trade of which the Portuguese *asientistas* had been deprived by Philip IV's edicts after the revolt. But they found that the King of Spain was almost as reluctant to grant them the *asiento* as he was to deal with the Portuguese, and that a licensed trade would pay them no better than the contraband traffic in which they were supreme. But the tide of Dutch commercial supremacy did not remain at high-water mark for long. Soon after 1648 the Netherlands were driven out of some of the West African slave factories by the attacks of the coast

chiefs who found them hard and grasping neighbours. Other trading posts in Guinea were recovered by the Portuguese, and English merchants came in to buy negroes for the new sugar plantations.

Under the Commonwealth various English merchants tried to secure licences from the King of Spain to transport negroes to Santo Domingo and other Spanish colonies, but without success. The most important of these offers was made through Sir Henry Bennet (afterwards the celebrated Earl of Arlington), who was at that date (1658) the agent of the exiled Charles II at the Court of Madrid. Bennet's proposition to export some thousands of negroes procured by English ships and to pay a stated sum to the Crown for each was at first considered favourably, but the opinion of the Council of the Indies was wholly against its acceptance for a reason which shews that they fully realised the important political issues involved. The Council advised the King that the proposition was merely another attempt to secure the relaxation of the laws forbidding foreigners to trade in the Indies which all the maritime nations desired to remove. If a licence were granted to an Englishman, Hollanders and Frenchmen would demand similar licences for themselves, for they were all competitors for the trade of the Spanish colonies and cared more for their surreptitious profits than for any licensed gains.

The absence of any *asiento* from 1640 to 1663, though it was a grievous loss to the Spanish Crown, did not mean a cessation of the importation of negroes. In fact during those years they were being delivered in Santo Domingo, Cuba and the colonies on the Main in larger numbers and at lower prices than ever. With them came greater quantities of manufactured goods

and the colonial markets were better stocked, while they sold their produce to better advantage. The Spanish Government detested this leakage of almost all the profits of their colonies to the heretical Netherlanders, but they were almost helpless, for they could not find any Spanish subject who would take up and work an *asiento*, and the attacks of the buccaneers, which we shall describe below, made all other Spanish trade precarious. However, in 1663 the Dominican Order, which had many estates in the Indies and needed slaves for its plantations, introduced two Genoese merchants, Grillo and Lomelin, who were willing to take up an *asiento* under conditions that we shall discuss when we speak in detail of the trade in a later chapter.<sup>1</sup> The *asientistas* were stringently forbidden to trade with the detested Portuguese, and they were therefore compelled to purchase their negroes from the Dutch pens at Curaçao or from one of the other nations that were striving to develop their slave-trade. Both England and France were founding new companies for the purpose, and the new *asiento* of 1663 produced immediate reactions in the colonial policy of each of the powers and thus affected the general international situation. Their plans for the encouragement of their own trade were being worked out simultaneously along different lines and we must consider each in turn. In both cases the buccaneers were an essential factor in the shaping of the policy adopted.

During the Civil War and the early years of the Commonwealth the English colonists in the West Indies bought all their negroes from the Dutch, but the strict enforcement of the Navigation Ordinances put a stop to such dealings and this was felt as a serious

<sup>1</sup> See below, Chapter XVIII.

grievance. It was important therefore to arrange for a supply of slaves through English sources, and immediately after the Restoration a Company of Adventurers trading to Africa was founded to link together the scattered operations of individual English merchants. Our friendly relations with Portugal enabled the Company to make their purchases of negroes with the aid of Portuguese agents at the recovered factories where the trade was mostly carried on, but they had to face the bitter opposition of the Netherlanders, who did not scruple to use the most violent means to bolster up their claims to monopoly. Danish and Swedish companies under the management of renegade Hollanders were also trying to trade on the African coast and they determinedly resisted the Dutch, who strove to expel them as interlopers. Thus the Guinea rivers and the Gold Coast saw many conflicts, and trading was much disturbed.

The first step that led unmistakably to another Dutch war was taken when in 1663 Charles II despatched Captain Robert Holmes with a well-armed squadron to the African coast to protect English claims against interference in their trade. Holmes was ordered not to undertake open hostilities, but according to what he reported, he found the Dutch so hostile and their influence over the coast chiefs so inimical to English interests that he was compelled to take action. Early in 1664 he seized and occupied the Dutch factories at Goree, Cape Verde, Cape Coast Castle and elsewhere, besides taking various ships that he found trading for slaves. Such warlike actions in time of peace could not fail to provoke Dutch reprisals, and open war was not long delayed. In that war the West Indies must play an important part, and Charles II and his ministers deter-



mined to economise the naval forces needed by making use of the buccaneers.

The first governors of Jamaica after its conquest greatly favoured and assisted the buccaneers who had grown during the wars of the 'fifties from the primitive and scattered cow-killers of earlier years into a powerful and dangerous force of desperadoes, well armed and at times well led. They made Port Royal their home port whenever they were permitted to do so, and upon the proceeds of their lawless depredations the prosperity of the town and colony largely depended. When Charles II immediately after his restoration adopted a policy of trying to secure a share of Spanish trade by agreement, it was clear that connivance in the attacks of the buccaneers must cease, and an old Barbadian, Sir Thomas Modyford, who, like all his fellows from that colony, was opposed to buccaneering as destructive of peaceful trade, was appointed as Governor of Jamaica.

Modyford deserves much credit as the first to conceive the new West Indian policy that was to play such an important part in English maritime affairs for more than a century. His plan was to develop Jamaica into the emporium we spoke of above, where slaves might be collected from Africa and matured while awaiting sale to the Spanish colonies. English goods might be stored to await favourable opportunities for sale, and the produce of the Spanish Main might be dealt with by Jamaican merchants who would make Port Royal into a busy centre of commercial enterprise. To carry out this statesmanlike scheme he must persuade the Spanish governors that he desired friendly relations. But the opposite party, who had strong friends among the government at home, favoured an anti-Spanish policy as giving more immediate returns, and desired to foster

the buccaneers and encourage them to bring all their spoils to Jamaica. This was a direct continuation of the old Elizabethan-Cromwellian policy of the privateering war but under less reputable conditions, and for fifteen years (1663-78) the two plans were debated both in the Cabinet at home and in the West Indies with alternate favour and necessarily diverse effects, especially in Jamaica. As we shall see later, a similar conflict of policy went on among the French with like effects in St. Domingue.

At his first appointment Modyford tried assiduously to enter into friendly relations with the Spanish governors of the neighbouring colonies, but he was unable to convince them either of the sincerity of his advances or of his power to control the buccaneers. Their power was rising and they were supported by the great majority of the Jamaicans, who saw their best opportunities of profit and indulgence in the readily squandered plunder of the rovers. Only a regular, disciplined cruising squadron could prevent the buccaneers from carrying out what raids they wished, for when Port Royal was closed to them for the disposal of their prizes they merely hoisted Portuguese colours and transferred their base to Hispaniola.

The buccaneers included outlaws of every nation, but the majority were either English or French, and they tended to separate into two factions who looked for support and encouragement to the governors of their respective settled colonies. The objective of their most acute rivalry was the fortress island of Tortuga, off the north-west coast of Hispaniola, which had been their earliest base. Le Vasseur, the able Huguenot who had driven out the English in 1641, held the island for twelve years against all the efforts of the Spaniards or of his nominal superior in St. Christopher to displace him.

He strongly fortified Tortuga, but at last in 1653 he was assassinated by his own followers. His successor, the Chevalier de Fontenay, was attacked by the Spaniards from Santo Domingo in January 1654 and driven out. A Spanish garrison was left to hold the island, but it was withdrawn in 1655 to aid in the defence of Santo Domingo against Penn and Venables. Certain Englishmen from Jamaica, hearing that the island was deserted, sailed across to reoccupy it and for four years (1655-59) Tortuga again became a rendezvous for the English buccaneers. There were still a few Spanish settlements remaining in the north-west of Hispaniola, but the savage raids of the Englishmen entirely destroyed them and left that part of the island a desert with important consequences in the next few years. Colonel D'Oyley, Governor of Jamaica, tried with the aid of some French deserters to establish a regular English government in Tortuga in 1658-59, but he failed because the French governors of St. Christopher were ready to offer the settlers more favourable terms.

When Charles II dropped his attempts to secure advantages from Spain by agreement in 1663, Modyford was ordered to relax his restrictions against the buccaneers and permitted to grant commissions of reprisal to them. The new policy aimed at securing the defence of the English colonies, especially Jamaica, against Spanish attacks and against the Dutch by using the buccaneers as a striking force and a planter militia for land defence. It was thought that this would be much cheaper than the Protectorate policy of employing disciplined regiments and Navy ships, and it was really a revival of the old idea of making maritime war pay for itself and yield a profit. The English leaders among the corsairs were ready to accept Modyford's new favour,

and Port Royal again became the scene of busy activity. Ship-repairing and boat-building went on apace and the planters of the interior found a ready market for their provisions to victual the buccaneers' men-of-war. But the Frenchmen among the rovers would not listen to the idea of siding with the English against their old Dutch patrons, and leaving Jamaica they concentrated themselves upon Tortuga and expelled most of the English living there.

While the English were striving to equip themselves for a new struggle with the Dutch, the French colonies saw a striking revival of interest in their fortunes among the authorities at home. In the schemes of *le grand monarque* for world leadership the Spanish Indies already filled a large place, and we must turn back a little to understand how the revival of France's official interest in her West Indian possessions came about. When the Company of the Isles of America came to shipwreck, the islands were disposed of to individual proprietors, as we mentioned in the previous chapter. Among the principal supporters of the Company had been the powerful *surintendant des finances*, Nicolas Fouquet, who had regarded it as an important instrument of policy. In his own *Defense*, a memoir written to expound his schemes, he tells us that he planned to render a great service to the King by taking away from the Hollanders the commerce of the West Indian islands which they had usurped and thus finding good investments for French capital. But neither he nor other projectors who were concerning themselves with the affairs of the Antilles about the same time, seem to have thought of anything more than the trade of the French islands themselves. As one of them wrote, 'the great number of vessels which Dutch merchants send to the French

islands is proof that trade with these islands is very profitable, for otherwise they would not send 100 or 120 large ships there every year. In order that the French may profit from this commerce it is necessary to exclude all foreigners from the privileges of trade there, as the Dutch, Spanish and English have done in regard to their colonies.' This was but a demand for the efficient carrying out of the traditional restrictive policy, but Colbert, Fouquet's greater successor, went further and saw that the French Antilles might afford greater opportunities of national profit than their own comparatively petty trade. His schemes can have derived nothing from Modyford, but they were being evolved almost at the same date. In them the Antilles, the Spanish colonies and the West African slave factories each played an integral part.

In the summer of 1664 a new Company of the West Indies was founded and a smaller company that had been attempting the colonisation of Cayenne was absorbed. The lords proprietors of the French part of St. Christopher and of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Grenada, Marie Galante and Desirade were bought out, and Monsieur de Tracy was sent to St. Christopher as lieutenant-general of all the French possessions in America with orders to restore discipline and good government in the proprietary colonies and bring the *flibustiers* to obedience. By 1665 the Company seemed ready to start new developments on a larger scale than ever before, and the time appeared propitious, for, owing to the imminence of war with England, the Dutch had not sent their usual ships to the islands, and the French planters were in urgent need of vessels to carry their sugar to Europe, and the stores of manufactured goods in the islands were very low.

Colbert's plans for the development of planting in the colonies followed the usual lines and were fully set forth in the published documents which were circulated to attract subscriptions to the new Company. But he had a wider purpose which was not disclosed to the public and, although it was not fully elaborated for some time, we must mention its influence on French policy from as early as 1663. It was the same idea as Modyford had conceived, the ousting of the Dutch from their Spanish colonial trade. As the French emporium to replace Curaçao he designed to develop Grenada, just as Modyford planned to use Jamaica. There he proposed to make a great market for negro slaves, and to obtain them he resolved to develop French trade in West Africa, for he saw that the Antilles and the slave-trading factories were essentially complementary.

The French had established a small fort and trading-post at Saint Louis at the mouth of the river Senegal as early as 1612, and there and on the Gambia various small trading companies had struggled to build up trade with very little success. The dominant position in the gum- and slave-trade of the region was held by the Hollanders from Goree, a post which they had taken from the Portuguese before 1620. When the Company of the West Indies was founded, Colbert granted them exclusive rights of trade from Cape Blanco down to Sierra Leone and all previous rights were bought out. The trading-posts in Senegal passed into the hands of the Company just before the outbreak of the war with England in April 1665, which was to have a most prejudicial effect on the fortunes of the scheme.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SECOND DUTCH WAR, 1665-1667

IT will be remembered that in 1663 Captain Robert Holmes had expelled the Dutch from Goree and other places in Guinea and occupied their factories. The Dutch West India Company was stirred to action to preserve the last remnants of its monopoly of the slave-trade and Admiral De Ruyter was fitted out with a strong squadron. In January 1665 he appeared in Guinea waters and at once undertook action for the recovery of the forts captured by the English. He soon reoccupied the important island of Goree, which commanded the valuable trade in gum and slaves down the Senegal, and expelled the English from various of their posts on the Gold Coast. He captured and confiscated many English-owned slavers on the plea that their cargoes had been obtained in regions where the Dutch had exclusive rights by reason of their conquest from the first discoverers, the Portuguese. But these operations were only the first part of his bold scheme. This was to seize something of value among the English possessions even before war was declared so as to have a counter to bargain with. Sailing direct from Guinea across the Atlantic, de Ruyter attacked Barbados without warning on 20 April 1665 and attempted to destroy the forts and capture the shipping in the harbour. The Barbadians, however, were too much for him and were able to beat him off after a few hours' engagement.

The Dutchman sailed away to repair his damages with French aid at Martinique and thence passed northwards to raid the English colonies in the Leeward Islands on his way to Virginia and New England. He could not effect a landing, but he captured the ships lying in the harbours of Montserrat and Nevis and completely destroyed the season's cargoes for export.

The inevitable consequence of this daring raid was the outbreak of war, and the policy of basing the defence of the islands on the buccaneers was soon put to the test, for there had been no properly organised naval fleet in the Caribbean since the departure of Vice-Admiral Goodson's squadron in 1658. With a maritime war of the first magnitude on hand in the Narrow Seas the Admiralty could not spare a fleet for the West Indies, and the few frigates available had to be retained for convoy duties. The Caribbean war must depend upon local resources, and Modyford set to work with vigour to carry out the policy entrusted to him. He got together a force of ten ships and 500 men recruited from the buccaneers and despatched them under the command of Colonel Edward Morgan to attack the Dutch *entrepôts* of slaves and merchandise in St. Eustatius and Saba. If they were successful there, Modyford planned that they should pass on to capture Curaçao and thence to seize Tortuga from the French *flibustiers* gathered there. But the programme was far too ambitious for an undisciplined force and it soon broke down.

St. Eustatius and Saba fell easily before the buccaneers' attack, but fierce quarrels broke out over the disposal of the booty, and it was impossible to keep the ships together for the projected attack on Curaçao. This unreliability was the glaring defect of attempting to use the buccaneers to further national policy, for they sought



only their own personal profit and had neither patriotism nor loyalty to which to appeal. Their indiscipline was illustrated further a few months after the capture of St. Eustatius when Lord Willoughby was planning to capture the Dutch colony of Tobago with a force from Barbados. Before he could strike, the island was seized by buccaneers and they could only be bought off from destroying its plantations by Willoughby's acquiescence in their retention of all the plunder they could carry off.

While the English were thus trying to make use of the buccaneers with but partial success, the governors sent out by Colbert's new West India Company were finding similar difficulties in bringing the planters to compliance with his restrictive policy. The supercargoes sent out by the Company were inexperienced and lavishly extravagant where the Dutch had been skilful and cautious. Thus they were unable to meet all the demands made upon them and the planters clamoured for permission to purchase from the neighbouring English islands the goods and negroes that they needed. But Colbert's newly appointed governors had strict orders to forbid all trade with foreigners, and in consequence Martinique and Guadeloupe seethed with unrest. They even broke out into open revolt, and it was only after much difficulty that obedience was enforced.

It was only in Hispaniola that a real forward step was accomplished in the first years of the new Company of the West Indies, and this was due not to its actions but to the personal efforts of its governor, one of the ablest colonial administrators ever employed by France. Bertrand d'Ogeron had originally come out to the West Indies in 1656 to plant sugar in Martinique, but his enterprise involved him in many unfortunate losses, and he planned to move to Jamaica and take up lands under

the English there. He entered into friendly relations with the *flibustiers* who then frequented Port Royal, and acquired great popularity among them as a skilful leader. When Colbert was planning to consolidate French power in the Antilles, d'Ogeron was recommended to him as the most likely person to influence the buccaneers, and in 1665 he was appointed Governor of Tortuga and ordered to make that island a centre from which to extend French influence in Hispaniola.

D'Ogeron's task was one of extraordinary difficulty, but he accomplished it with so much success that he deserves to be remembered as the founder of what became France's richest colony. At first he could not persuade the buccaneers to accept his government, for they were determined not to abandon their intercourse with the Dutch or with any rovers who came to their harbours. He found the men whom he hoped to convert into settled colonists dispersed in small and unorganised parties living in the most primitive fashion. As he reported to Colbert in 1665, there were 'seven or eight hundred Frenchmen [scattered] along the coasts of the Island of Hispaniola in inaccessible places, surrounded by mountains or by great rocks and the sea, by which alone they could pass from place to place in their little boats. They are three or four or six or ten together separated from one another by six, eight or fifteen leagues according as they find convenient places. They live like savages without recognising anyone's authority and without any chief, and they commit a thousand brigandages. They have robbed many Dutch and English vessels, which has caused much disorder. They live on the meat of wild swine and cattle and make a little tobacco which they barter for arms, provisions and clothes. So it is very necessary for his Majesty to give

an order to cause these people to leave the said island of Hispaniola and betake themselves in two months into Tortuga which they would do without doubt if it were fortified, and that would bring in a great revenue to the King if all captains of merchant ships and others were forbidden to buy or sell anything to the Frenchmen called *boucaniers* along the coast of Hispaniola.'

Gradually the Governor managed to persuade the *boucaniers* to abandon their wild life in the woods and to settle down to planting either in Tortuga or at places in the extreme west of Hispaniola like Petit-Goave or Leogane. He brought out many new settlers from France at his own expense and that of his friends. Discontented planters came to join him from the other French islands, and within two or three years there were 2000 French colonists in Western Hispaniola leading settled lives and employing a growing number of negro slaves upon their plantations. The true *boucaniers* who roamed the woods were reduced to hardly 100 persons. D'Ogeron did not attempt to suppress or absorb the *flibustiers* in the same way, for he designed to employ them to further national policy. In this he was much more successful than the English, for before long he had attracted all the French rovers from Port Royal and had concentrated them in his own stronghold of Tortuga. War was imminent and he was thus provided with a ready-made force of privateers to let loose against English commerce whenever he received orders to do so.

While the situation was thus shaping itself in the Caribbean, the rival Courts in Europe were fencing for position in a series of tortuous negotiations in which England was usually overreached by Louis XIV and his able diplomats. The general trend was in the direction of a *rapprochement* between England and Spain, and in

1664 Charles II sent Sir Richard Fanshawe to Madrid to bargain for a recognised position in the trade of the Indies and for a share for the Royal African Company in the *asiento* or privilege of supplying negroes to the Spanish colonies. In return he promised an alliance in defence of the integrity of the Spanish dominions against the Dutch and France, but Philip IV was reluctant to listen, because England would neither agree to withdraw her support from his rebellious Portuguese subjects nor to return Jamaica to Spanish possession. It was especially upon this former point that the negotiations halted, for Philip regarded the reconquest of Portugal as essential to Spanish honour. It was only when the old King's pride was broken by the news of the final disastrous defeat of his armies by the Anglo-Portuguese forces at the battle of Villa Viçosa in June 1665 that the guardians of his infant successor were forced to admit that their old pretensions were no longer tenable. A real menace to Spanish independence from the undisguised ambition of Louis XIV overshadowed all other questions, and the once all-powerful monarchy had now to seek for allies on what terms it could. But England's undisguised patronage of the buccaneers, and her connivance in their depredations on the Spanish colonies though the two powers were ostensibly at peace, made it impossible to bring the negotiations to any successful conclusion. Until Charles II and his ministers made a radical change in their West Indian policy, their schemes for strengthening their position in Europe could not be realised.

It was not this consideration, however, that brought the change so much as that the complete failure of the idea of using the buccaneers as a weapon had been demonstrated by the disasters that followed the entry of France

into the Dutch war in January 1666. Until the close of 1665 things had gone generally in England's favour in the West Indies and Dutch shipping had been practically swept from the waters of the Caribbean, but then the tables were completely turned and England's dominion in the Antilles came very near to shipwreck. Since 1662 Louis XIV had been in nominal alliance with the States-General, and he did not like to see the Dutch colonies falling wholesale into English hands, for he aimed at acquiring them for himself. On repeated occasions since 1627 the rival French and English settlers had entered into agreements to preserve neutrality in the islands even though their governments were at war in Europe, but in 1665 the English were unwilling to renew these agreements, for they felt themselves strong enough to overwhelm the French planters in St. Christopher and the other islands whenever the outbreak of war in Europe should release them to the attack.

The English policy had become steadily more aggressive and regardless of the interests of others in the islands ever since the Restoration, and this involved the tearing up of an agreement that had been of great local importance for the prosperity of both the English and the French colonies. All of them, save possibly Barbados, had suffered from the raids of the ferocious Caribs who still dwelt in the inner forests of many of the islands, and in 1659 the French Governors of St. Christopher and Guadeloupe entered into agreement with the English of Nevis, Antigua and Montserrat for an offensive and defensive alliance against the savages. They were threatened with joint action on a wide scale if they did not cease their attacks on isolated European settlements, but in return it was promised that no

European would attempt to settle upon St. Vincent and Dominica, which were to be Carib preserves.

That the danger of Carib attack was very real had been demonstrated by the fate of the English settlement in St. Lucia, which, having flourished between 1637 and 1640, was then completely wiped out by the savages. The island remained without white settlers until the late 'fifties when certain Frenchmen from Guadeloupe started planting there and continued in occupation for some years. Both nations, therefore, had certain claims to St. Lucia by right of previous settlement, but with their new aggressive outlook and desire for more territory the English paid no attention to French rights.

The able Governor of Barbados, Lord Willoughby of Parham, who had resumed his rule of the island for the King in 1663, knew St. Lucia well and looked to it to form a suitable home for his grossly redundant population. Some Englishmen had already drifted across from Barbados, and in 1664 Lord Willoughby sent over 1000 settlers to establish an organised colony. The French of Guadeloupe regarded this as flagrant poaching on their rights and a direct breach of the old neutrality agreements. But matters became worse in the following year when Willoughby named Thomas Warner, the half-breed Carib son of old Sir Thomas Warner, as Deputy-Governor of St. Vincent and sent him to live among the Caribs there. It was clear that the English thought themselves strong enough to extend their possessions regardless of the rights of others, but the French governors at first did not dare to take serious action. It was known that King Louis XIV was very likely to enter the war in support of his Dutch allies, but as the French were in a distinct minority in the islands, they did not wish to expose themselves to

English attack. They therefore tried to persuade Willoughby to enter into a new treaty of neutrality and to include Modyford's government of Jamaica, which had not been comprised in earlier agreements. However, Willoughby had received direct orders from England not to tie his hands, for Charles II's ministers, advised by their West Indian merchants, thought they saw an opportunity of using Modyford's buccaneers to expel the French colonists from their sugar islands if war should break out. The decisions of the Cabinet and Privy Council were, in fact, being governed and controlled by the rudimentary beginnings of that 'West India interest' that was to pursue such a selfish but influential line in the politics of the succeeding century.

Willoughby would not return a clear answer to the French about a general agreement for neutrality, but in St. Christopher it was settled that seventy-two hours' notice should be given before any hostilities were undertaken on either side. This was all the Englishmen would concede, for they hoped with aid of Sir Thomas Modyford's buccaneers, who had captured St. Eustatius from the Dutch, as we mentioned above, to overwhelm the French settlers in St. Christopher before they could get help from outside. Thence it was planned to proceed to Tortuga and to expel the French from every foothold in the northern islands. However, matters went quite differently from what was planned, and the tide of success that the English had won in the Caribbean against the Dutch was dramatically turned. It was not until three months after Louis XIV's declaration of war against England (January 1666) that the official notification reached the West Indies. But the English settlers in St. Christopher had had private news some time before, and they were secretly preparing to make a

descent on the much less numerous French, when the latter audaciously turned the tables upon them. The buccaneers who had landed to aid the English governor in his projected attack were assailed by surprise from a quite unexpected quarter. Their lack of discipline made them break and flee before the French dash, and the enmity existing between the English planters and their Irish servants made it impossible for the colonists to make any stand. Numbers of the Catholic Irish at once deserted to the enemy, and in a few hours the English were compelled to surrender unconditionally and the whole of St. Christopher was in French hands. More than 8000 English settlers were shipped off in very distressing circumstances to Virginia, Jamaica or Nevis, and the whole of their property was divided up among the victorious French planters, who were able to purchase developed plantations for next to nothing.

The first round in the fight had gone unmistakably to France, and the buccaneers, on whose assistance the English government had confidently relied, had proved a most unsatisfactory weapon against disciplined and well-led antagonists. As soon as Willoughby learned of the disaster he lost no time in trying to repair it from his own resources in Barbados. He had no control over the pro-buccaneer policy pursued by Jamaica, and he rightly attributed a large share of the blame for the disaster to this lack of a unified command in the West Indies. He had no navy ships at his disposal, but, although the hurricane season was coming on, he could not delay, and he pressed what merchant ships he could into service and put a force of Barbadian militia aboard and a supply of arms with which to equip the planters in the Leeward Islands still in English hands. A force of 600 militia that he had despatched earlier under the



command of his nephew, Henry Willoughby, had found it impossible to land in St. Christopher in the face of the watchful French, but it was awaiting him in Antigua, and, with the forces at his disposal, the Governor felt himself fully capable of carrying out the insistent orders for the reconquest that he had received from England.

Lord Willoughby sailed from Barbados in July 1666, and aimed first at Martinique, which he hoped to find unprepared. But reinforcements from France had recently arrived in the roadstead of St. Pierre, and they were too strong for him to tackle. Passing on, Willoughby stayed to attack two armed French merchantmen or privateers that he encountered off the dangerous rocky islets of the Saints, and the delay was fatal. While still entangled in the treacherous navigation near the reefs, his fleet was struck by one of the devastating hurricanes that are not uncommon in the Antilles during the month of August. The ships were scattered; some of them, including Willoughby's own, foundered with all hands, while others were driven ashore and the crews compelled to surrender by French militia from Guadeloupe and Caribs from Dominica. This tragic disaster (16 August 1666) not only deprived the English of a most statesmanlike and experienced governor, but it threw the command of the sea entirely into French hands with far-reaching consequences that were not long in appearing.

Antigua fell to a surprise attack in November, and a little later the buccaneers in St. Eustatius were driven out or destroyed by a French force which retained possession of the island despite the protests of the Dutch, who claimed it as their property. Tobago, too, was cleared of buccaneers without difficulty by planters from Grenada, while Montserrat was compelled to

surrender to Admiral de la Barre in February 1667, and only a few fugitives managed to escape to Jamaica. Nevis alone remained in English hands among the Leeward Islands, but, crowded as it was with refugees from St. Christopher, it was reduced to a state of semi-starvation by the stoppage of all communication by the French *flibustiers*. Barbados was still safe, but it was in obvious danger, for a Dutch squadron that had captured Willoughby's colony in Surinam had now joined La Barre at Martinique and they were preparing an attack. But before long there was another dramatic change of affairs.

The news of the disastrous loss of Lord Willoughby's fleet coming not long after the shameful story of the loss of St. Christopher stirred the English government to an unwonted display of energy. It was realised at last that the policy of relying upon buccaneers and planter militia had gone very near to involving the whole of our West Indian possessions in ruin. France was sending out navy ships and skilled commanders, and, unless we were prepared to do the same, we should certainly be beaten. William Willoughby, who had acted as Governor-in-Chief since his brother's death, did not hesitate to point out to the government the faults of their buccaneering policy in the letter in which he announced the fatal news (November 1666). The lesson could not be neglected, and, in consultation with the Lord Admiral, James, Duke of York, it was determined to send out a powerful fleet with William Willoughby, who was commissioned as Governor, and a regiment of trained and disciplined soldiers under an old and tried commander, Sir Tobias Bridge, who had learned his soldiering under Cromwell and had seen much war service. Willoughby sailed from Portsmouth in March 1667

with full powers as vice-admiral to press and arm merchant ships, and he was followed a few days later by a squadron of well-armed frigates commanded by a capable seaman, Sir John Harman. The arrival of these forces in Barbados at the end of April and their junction with other frigates that had crossed the Atlantic earlier definitely restored superiority to the English.

Before Willoughby's arrival, however, the Barbadians had taken the initiative. Four navy frigates and four armed merchantmen were fitted out at the cost of the colony and despatched against Guadeloupe under the command of Captain Berry. There they succeeded in destroying a Dutch squadron lying in harbour, and they passed on to blockade the French in St. Christopher from Nevis as base. Berry reoccupied Antigua and Montserrat, and greatly relieved the distress in Nevis by opening access to it for provision ships, so that by May 1667 things looked much more hopeful than they had done. The pressure was now transferred to the blockaded French in St. Christopher and de la Barre was compelled to take action to relieve them. He gathered at Martinique a force of nineteen vessels, including ten French and three or four Dutch men-of-war, and organised them in two squadrons numbering in all some 1200 men. Sailing to the north, he hoped to fall upon Berry's much smaller squadron with overwhelming force. When off the harbour of Nevis, however, on 20 May he found that the English had no hesitation in joining battle, and the French were so poorly led by de la Barre that they could not properly use their superiority in gun power. After some hours of indecisive fighting in which Berry's ships generally came off best, the French admiral broke off the combat and sailed across to the harbour of St. Christopher.

Nearly three weeks later Henry Willoughby appeared off the island with a part of the fleet from Barbados and a landing force of 3500 men, but his precipitation destroyed his chance of success. Without waiting for the reinforcement of Sir John Harman's frigates, which were only a couple of days behind, Willoughby attempted to surprise the French by a sudden landing in force; but Saint-Laurent, their commander, was ready, and, though the Englishmen got to shore without loss, they found it impossible to advance. The resulting fighting was almost as disastrous to our arms as the first battle in St. Christopher fourteen months before. Very heavy losses were suffered by the attackers, who were huddled together on an exposed beach under the fire of the French on the surrounding slopes, and, before the fight was over, a large part of the English force was compelled to surrender as prisoners. Henry Willoughby managed to re-embark the remainder with great difficulty and returned to Nevis with but a fraction of those who had set out.

When Harman's squadron arrived a little later, it was decided not to attempt St. Christopher again but to make a descent upon Martinique, which was reported to have been denuded of troops for the reinforcement of Saint-Laurent's garrison. From a captured *flibustier* Harman learned that the fleet that was expected from France had not arrived, and in reality it had not been despatched owing to the commencement of peace negotiations in Europe. Only the vessels under de la Barre's command remained to be dealt with, and, when he appeared off the coast of Martinique at the end of June, Harman found these gathered under the shelter of the forts of St. Pierre. For more than a week he sailed up and down the coast trying to tempt the French ships

out or bombarding them as they lay at their moorings. But the commanders would not venture, and bit by bit Harman destroyed or disabled every vessel. This long-drawn-out action restored sea power in the Caribbean to the English, with the usual effects upon the isolated colonies of the enemy.

From Martinique Harman returned to Nevis, but he did not make a new attempt upon St. Christopher, for the French there were thoroughly prepared to resist a landing. Tortuga was not worth an attack in force, so it was determined to send him against Cayenne and Surinam, where a double blow might be struck against the French and the Dutch and considerable booty might be expected. Cayenne was captured with hardly a blow in August 1667, but the Dutchmen in Surinam put up a good fight. However, it was of no avail, and Harman easily occupied Lord Willoughby's colony. He got back to Barbados early in November, only to learn that the news of the peace concluded at Breda in July had been received a week or two before and that his conquests made since that date must be returned.

The effects of two years of war upon the islands had been tragic. The struggle had been more bitterly fought than any previous hostilities between the maritime nations in the West Indies, and its legacy was acute hatred between the French and English colonists where there had previously been mutual tolerance and some respect. The Dutch had lost all their colonies save Curaçao and most of their shipping, and most of the old channels for their illicit trade with the Spanish colonies had been blocked or broken. Against this very serious consequence of the war they could set the profits they had derived from the renewal of their trade with the French islands, but they were bound to realise that this

relaxation of Colbert's restrictive regulations was only due to necessity and could not last. Their exclusion from the English islands was stricter than ever, and undoubtedly in the West Indies the war marks a steep step downward for the Dutch from their pitch of commercial supremacy.

The English and the French alike had lost far more than they had gained, and, with one notable exception on each side, their colonies had lost nearly all the progress they had made in forty years of planting. Barbados and Martinique, certainly, and Guadeloupe, possibly, had held their own, for none of those islands had been invaded. But they had lost heavily in men, and the crushing burden of taxation that had been imposed for the expenses of the war had drained away capital from the improvement of their plantations. It was the Leeward Islands that had suffered most and especially the English planters there. The French in St. Christopher had lost heavily by the blockade of the island, but the English had lost everything. They had been compelled, if they were landowners, to sell their plantations for a song, their slaves had been confiscated or dispersed, and, like their landless white servants, they had been driven into exile with nothing. English St. Christopher had to be colonised again from the beginning. Nevis had suffered heavily from overcrowding and starvation, but Antigua was worse off, for it had been devastated from end to end and every plantation had to be restocked. Montserrat was little better off, and the few smaller English islands like Anguilla had all fared hardly while they were in French hands. The French and the Dutch in the smaller islands, St. Martin, St. Bartholomew and St. Croix, had all been pillaged too from St. Eustatius while it was in the hands of the buccaneers, and it was

long before their life was set going again, and then sometimes in the hands of new masters.

Only Jamaica and the new French colony in Hispaniola seemed to have escaped the ravages of the war and even to have benefited from it by the influx of fugitive settlers from the other islands. The prosperity of each, however, was still far more bound up with buccaneering against the Spaniards than with planting, so that their progress was dependent upon different factors from that of the other Antilles, for it was governed directly by our relations with Spain, which henceforward affected the 'sugar islands' of the Lesser Antilles very little.

While the war was packed with incident in the colonies, it was only fought on a very limited scale in Europe, although England had practically no supporters among the other powers. Louis gave very little assistance to the Dutch, for he desired to limit hostilities to Africa and America in order to avoid forcing England into alliance with Spain and thus impeding his designs on the Spanish Netherlands. The course of the maritime war was balanced between alternate Dutch and English victories which were invariably barren of result because they could not be driven home at any vital point. Both countries were suffering from privateering attacks upon their commerce, and both were anxious for peace, though England was the more reluctant to offer acceptable terms. Formal negotiations began at Breda in February 1667 on the mediation of Sweden, but not until after the Dutch raid upon the Medway in June had demonstrated the straits to which Charles II's domestic difficulties had brought him could he be persuaded to abate his demands and agree to conditions that were practically dictated by Louis.

The King of France was anxious to clear up the colonial war in order to free his hands in Europe, and he was quite prepared to buy Charles off by secret subsidies if he could thus secure his ends. In April 1667 the two monarchs signed a secret treaty by which they pledged themselves not to enter into any alliance with one another's enemies. Charles, in fact, thus bound himself not to assist Spain in any war that France might undertake against her. Though the war in the West Indies went on for some months, as we have seen, the end in Europe was not far distant after the secret treaty was signed. By the anxiety caused by Louis' invasion of the Spanish Netherlands the Dutch were driven to take the best terms they could get. Thus, for causes lying solely in Europe and far removed from the colonial sphere, both England and Holland, who had entered the war to serve their colonial interests, had to agree to a peace that made no systematic adjustment of their differences.

It was not until July 1667 that the public treaties of peace between England and the States-General and England and France respectively were signed at Breda. Their terms involved the acceptance of the *status quo* prevailing in the previous March, and all conquests held on that date (all of which lay outside Europe) were retained. This gave to England the definitive possession of New Netherland, renamed New York, but on the other hand the Dutch held Surinam, though it had been founded by Lord Willoughby and was occupied by English planters. France agreed to return the English part of St. Christopher in exchange for Acadia, but she retained Tobago, St. Eustatius and any other islands that had not been in English occupation before the outbreak of the Anglo-Dutch war. Thus in reality



Louis XIV secured the greater advantage from the treaties, not only by freeing his hands for his designs against Spain, but also at the expense of his late allies. The Dutch came off worst, for though certain relaxations of the Navigation Acts were granted in relation to their trade in Europe, the restrictive provisions of the Acts upon the trade of the English colonies remained in full vigour, and they were thus deprived of any hope of restoring their West Indian trade.

The war proved fatal to the Company of the West Indies, for its attempts to insist upon its exclusive rights in the Antilles involved it in ruinous losses which its extravagant and ill-directed policy did nothing to repair. The colonists, who had been accustomed to trade freely with the Dutch, refused to be bound by the restriction of their trade to the Company's ships, and their importunities obtained from the King a relaxation of these restrictions and the issue of licences to particular French merchants to trade in Africa and the Antilles despite the Company's monopoly. This policy so greatly relieved the distress in the colonies that by 1668 Colbert was convinced of the advantages to be derived from throwing open the trade to all Frenchmen. In letters to Governor de Baas, Lieutenant-Governor of the Isles of America, he announced that henceforth the Company would have no exclusive rights, but any French subject might trade to the Antilles, paying only certain licence dues. All foreigners, however, were to be excluded. The result was an immediate and rapid increase in the prosperity of the Antilles, and St. Domingue especially benefited. But by 1669 the Company was practically moribund, and, though it dragged on to 1672, it did nothing more in the Antilles.

The treaties of Breda are of considerable importance

in West Indian history because they mark the definitive distribution of colonial possessions in the islands between the rival powers. Henceforward until the middle of the eighteenth century there was little change in the ownership of the 'sugar islands', and the planters of each nation were left to consolidate their position without foreign interference. But the question of the trade of the Spanish Indies was not settled, and henceforward it came to be the main preoccupation of English and French statesmen in the Caribbean. The Dutch hold upon it was weakened by the Second Dutch War, but they still were the greatest traders in the Caribbean, and another war that was far more costly to them had to be fought before the jealousy of their commercial competitors could drive them from the ranks of the greater powers.

While the negotiations for the treaties were proceeding at Breda, discussions were taking place between England and Spain in Madrid that were intimately concerned with West Indian affairs but were unaffected by what was going on in Holland. These discussions finally decided the future of England's policy in relation to the buccaneers, but only after a series of extraordinary events that belong properly to a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE HEYDAY OF THE BUCCANEERS, 1665-1671

"Romance is crime in the past tense."

THE small part taken by the Jamaicans in the war with the Dutch and French has already been remarked, for only in the case of the expedition that captured St. Eustatius had the governors in the West Indies found it possible to turn the energies of their buccaneering protégés into channels that suited the policy of the government in England. In all other cases it was the rovers who determined what enterprise they would undertake and the government had to adapt its policy accordingly. They could find only hard fighting and little booty in the Leeward Islands or at Curaçao, but their familiar prey on the Spanish Main was always luring them with its promise of rich plunder. The crowded years of the war were not only filled with the movements we have already discussed, but had also an almost independent story of events of significance of which Jamaica was the centre. To these events and their repercussion on international relations we must now turn.

The events have been the storehouse of plots for the writers of sensational romance and melodramatic fiction for so long that a theatrical glamour has been cast over some very sordid tales of robbery, treachery and greed. Any sober historical narrative of the period must necessarily appear dull and insipid after the

flamboyant exploits of the stage buccaneers, but since it is a fact that they played for a time a part of first-rate importance in the development of West Indian policy, they must demand our attention.

In 1664 it was reported to the English government that there were as a rule some 1500 or 2000 rovers at sea pursuing their war on Spanish commerce with fourteen or fifteen well-armed ships besides the fly-boats that were originally used by the buccaneers. Since these rovers usually made their base at Port Royal in Jamaica they were always classed by the Spaniards as Englishmen though there were men of all nations among them. It was difficult, therefore, to get Spain to listen to overtures of friendship, and when Sir Richard Fanshawe was sent to Madrid to arrange a treaty, the Council ostentatiously appointed a Barbadian as Governor of Jamaica who was known to be opposed to buccaneering as destructive of all legitimate commerce.

Sir Thomas Modyford issued as ordered a stringent proclamation against anti-Spanish privateering as soon as he arrived in Jamaica in June 1664. The Spaniards were persuaded to believe that a new era of peaceful trade had begun, and sent twenty or thirty ships to Port Royal to purchase negroes from the English instead of the Dutch, but as they were returning they found the buccaneers lying in wait for them and any chance of further trade was ruined by their seizure. Modyford did his best to carry out the repressive policy, but he found that his confiscation of the Spanish prizes brought into Port Royal simply meant that the buccaneers carried them to Tortuga instead. In November 1664 he was informed by the Secretary of State that as a sudden and drastic prohibition of buccaneering seemed likely to be disadvantageous to Jamaica he might use

his own judgement as to when the restrictions were to be enforced or relaxed. This enabled him to collect his force of buccaneers for his expedition against St. Eustatius as already described.

Many of the best known pirate leaders took no notice of Modyford's invitation to come but continued their independent cruises wherever they expected good profit. Three of these men, Captains Morris, Jackman and Henry Morgan, got together a few hundred men at a rendezvous off the unfrequented coast of Yucatan and made a sudden raid on the town of Tabasco in the province of Campeche. Having gleaned a moderate booty, in the early months of 1665 they retired to refit in Ruatan, one of the Bay Islands in the Gulf of Honduras. Thence they raided and captured Truxillo, a city that had fallen to small importance, and sailing on down the Mosquito Coast to a favourite haunt in Blewfields Bay they ascended the San Juan river into the heart of Nicaragua. Such a bold raid into the interior had never before been attempted, but its very audacity helped its success, for the Spaniards of the inner provinces lived in open and undefended towns and paid little attention to military exercises. The buccaneers therefore found an easy prey. The capital city of Granada fell into their hands, and when they came into Port Royal with their booty in August 1665 there was a sum of 50,000 pieces of eight to divide between them besides the profits of the numerous slaves they had captured. Such a result of this new type of venture could not fail to attract imitators and with unfortunate results for Modyford's schemes.

In the summer of 1665 he received direct permission to issue commissions of reprisal against the Spaniards, for Fanshawe's mission to Madrid was meeting with no





success and the anti-Spanish party in the Privy Council were in the ascendant. Taking advantage of this permission, Modyford proclaimed his intention to encourage privateers in Port Royal and Tortuga, and the Jamaican harbours became once more a scene of busy activity. He saw a chance of resuming his design to employ the buccaneers against Curaçao and appointed a rendezvous for them in Blewfields Bay in November 1665.

The buccaneers chose as their leader Captain Edward Mansfield, and came to one of their usual agreements with him to divide their booty in shares, but they had no intention of proceeding against the Dutch. In a short time the English quarrelled with the French, and the latter sailed off to Hispaniola in response to d'Ogeron's tempting offers. Mansfield led the English buccaneers over to the southern coast of Cuba to provision themselves at the expense of the Spanish colonists. Their proceedings there soon led to a quarrel and the raiders planned to march to the northern coast and attack Havana, but hearing that the governor there was thoroughly prepared, they attacked the small towns of Bayamo and Sancti Spiritus instead and sacked them with great brutality (December 1665). Mansfield refused to listen to the remonstrances of Captain William Beeston, R.N., whom Modyford had sent to persuade him to proceed against Curaçao. He resolved instead to recapture the old pirate stronghold of Providence, which since its recapture in 1641 had been held by a strong Spanish garrison. By an audacious feat of navigation through the reefs he succeeded in surprising the Spaniards and compelling their surrender, a victory the news of which was warmly welcomed in England. The government accepted the island as a recapture of English



territory of proved value, and appointed Sir James Modyford, brother of the Governor of Jamaica, to be its lieutenant-governor under the larger colony (November 1666), though long before he could take up the appointment Providence was back in Spanish hands.

Meanwhile Mansfield and his buccaneers had proceeded to execute the design they had probably had in mind from the beginning. With the small boats from his ships and assisted by the friendly Mosquito Indians, he forced his way up the San Juan river into the lake of Nicaragua and laid the whole of the rich province round the lake under contribution. Granada was sacked again, its seven churches and five monasteries despoiled and desecrated, and a large part of the city destroyed so that it never recovered its former prosperity. Thence the buccaneers marched across into Costa Rica in military formation, leaving a trail of ruined villages and devastated plantations everywhere behind them to mark their track. Six months after they had landed, they came out to their ships on the coast of Veragua and sailed back to Jamaica, to be received complacently in June 1666 by Governor Modyford, though they had been waging nothing less than open war against the subjects of a power with whom England was nominally at peace. The Indies were still clearly beyond the bounds of international comity when such things could be done with the connivance of a civilised government, and, whatever advance might have been made in extending international law to the colonies of other nations, for many Englishmen the old dictum 'No peace beyond the line' still held round the colonies of Spain.

The well-remembered dangers to the trade of the Isthmus when Providence had been in English hands twenty-five years before stirred the Spanish authorities

to energetic action. The President of Panama commandeered an English ship lying in the harbour of Puerto Bello to trade in negroes under licence, and sent it across to Cartagena to take on board a force of trained soldiers. Accompanied by other troops in smaller craft, it sailed across to Providence under the command of José Sanchez Jimenez and, after a three days' siege, compelled the buccaneers to surrender. Sixty or seventy prisoners were taken and some of the brutal treatment that their fellows had meted out to their captives in Granada was returned upon them with interest. The old chivalry of combat of the days of Drake had gone, and atrocious cruelties on either side marked the detestable depths to which the anti-Spanish warfare in the West Indies had descended. Even the comparatively sluggish conscience of Restoration England was roused by the stories that trickled home from Jamaica, but the protests of the merchants, who saw their opportunities of supplanting the Dutch in the contraband trade destroyed by the depredations of the buccaneers, were of greater force in inducing a change of government policy.

Though Fanshawe's negotiations for a treaty of commerce with Spain had continued in Madrid all through 1665 and 1666, and finally resulted in an agreement signed by Lord Sandwich in May 1667, no definite and unmistakable orders were issued to Modyford to see that the outrages of the buccaneers were suppressed. He was certainly left in a very difficult position, for he was not supplied with the strong and mobile naval force that would be necessary if orders for the suppression of buccaneering were to be made effective. His own letters home left no doubt upon this point. As he wrote to Secretary Arlington in July 1667: 'Had my abilities

suited so well with my wishes as the latter did with your Lordship's, the privateers' attempts had been only practised on the Dutch and the French, and the Spaniards free of them, but I had no money to pay them nor frigates to force them; the former they could not get from our declared enemies, nothing could they expect but blows from them, and (as they have often repeated to me) will that pay for new sails and rigging? . . . [But] I will, suitable to your Lordship's directions, as far as I am able, restrain them from further acts of violence towards the Spaniards, unless provoked by new insolences'. He shewed clearly, however, that he knew that it was only by stringent orders and support from the home governments that reputable and peaceful trade could be brought into the Caribbean. 'Truly it must be very imprudent', he wrote, 'to run the hazard of [losing Jamaica], for obtaining a correspondence which could not but by orders from Madrid be had. . . . The Spaniards look on us as intruders wheresoever they find us in the Indies, and use us accordingly; and were it in their power, as it is fixed in their wills, would soon turn us out of all our plantations; and is it reasonable that we should quietly let them grow upon us until they are able to do it? It must be force alone that can cut in sunder that unneighbourly maxim of their government to deny all access to strangers.'

In the early part of 1668 Modyford had sure intelligence that the Spaniards were preparing to repeat in Jamaica the success they had won in the recapture of Providence, and he determined to carry out his own precept and with the only force he had at hand to crush the attempt before it could be begun. This was, as he well knew, waging war on his own responsibility in defiance of Lord Sandwich's treaty, but he knew that in

the negotiations that had preceded it the ambassador had insisted that peace did not extend to the Indies, and he knowingly took the risk of being disavowed.

After his return from the Nicaragua raid Mansfield disappeared and his influence among the buccaneers passed to a young Welshman, some thirty-three years of age, named Henry Morgan. He had won repute among the outlaws by his dare-devil courage and lack of scruple and he had besides some natural capacity for leadership. This was essential in so fickle a community that would only hold to a captain so long as he could dominate them by his personality and find enough plunder to gratify their greed. Early in 1668 Modyford commissioned Morgan to raid Cuba and find out whether there was any basis for the rumours of an approaching attack upon Jamaica from that island. Gathering together a force from the buccaneers who were lurking among the southern cays in the hope of purchase, he landed and marched across to the northern settlement of Puerto Principe, which he seized and despoiled. He reported that the Spaniards were preparing an invading force at Havana, and persuaded Modyford not to interfere with the audacious design he had conceived of anticipating it by a dash against Puerto Bello at the very heart of the Indies. The Frenchmen among the buccaneers refused to join him in an attack on so powerfully fortified a place with a regular garrison, but Morgan was able to get together a force of some 400 Englishmen, and in July 1668 he stole unheralded up one of the many small rivers that fall into the sea not far from the city.

The harbour of Puerto Bello at the time of the annual visit of the galleons was a scene of busy activity, but at other times of the year it did not hold a large population,

for the situation of the town was low and unhealthy and only the forts guarding the entrance from the sea were garrisoned with a force of some 300 men under the supreme command of the President of Panama, the centre of government for the Isthmus region. On the landward side Puerto Bello lay open and undefended, and this gave Morgan his chance. The port was often visited by English and Dutch ships bringing negroes under licence, and probably Morgan himself had visited it on one or more of these voyages. At any rate he was easily able to find English guides who knew the neighbourhood, and, landing his men some distance up the river, he crept along the narrow paths through the bush, and they surrounded the first of the forts guarding the harbour without warning. It soon fell before the furious assault of the buccaneers, and though the Spaniards surrendered upon promise of quarter, they were all thrust into a single room and blown to pieces by the firing of their magazine. Such of the inhabitants of the town as could escape shut themselves up in the remaining forts and put up a furious resistance, but one by one all the forts fell into the hands of their assailants and a shocking time of pillage and torture began that lasted for some fifteen days. Meanwhile the President of Panama was getting together what forces he had to recapture the city, but the buccaneers cared little, for they had brought their ships round into the harbour and were prepared to retreat at any moment. The forces from Panama were ambushed as they approached Puerto Bello and compelled to retreat, and finally Morgan was able to embark all his remaining men and their plunder without interference. When he came into one of the creeks on the uninhabited southern coast of Cuba to divide the booty, he had more than 250,000 pieces of

eight in ready money, his ships crammed with all the necessities they needed for further enterprises, all the best guns from the captured castles, besides an immense quantity of clothes, linen, silks and other European merchandise that had been seized in the store-houses of the port. 'With this rich purchase they sailed again from Cuba to their common place of rendezvous in Jamaica', says the celebrated writer Exquemelin, who probably was a member of the expedition, 'and being arrived, they passed here some time in all sorts of vices and debauchery, according to their common manner of doing, spending with huge prodigality what others had gained with no small labour and toil'.

Morgan arrived in Port Royal in August, and the fame of his exploit attracted large numbers to join him for another enterprise that rumour said he was preparing. The Governor threw no obstacles in his way, for he fully realised that his acceptance of what had been nothing less than an open act of war against Spain must be followed up at once before he could be disavowed from England. By October 1668 a force of ten ships and some 900 buccaneers had been allowed to fit themselves out in Port Royal and had rendezvoused with various French *flibustiers* at Isle la Vache off the southern coast of Hispaniola, where Morgan with the aid of the *boucaniers* of the woods hunted the wild cattle for meat to complete his stores of victuals. There it was determined to launch an attack against Cartagena, the centre of Spanish power in the Caribbean, but dissensions broke out between the English and French before a start could be made, and ultimately Morgan was compelled to acknowledge that the force under his command was not strong enough to attempt such a well-guarded place, and he changed his objective to the weaker port of

Maracaibo and whatever else he could take on the shores of the Spanish Main.

Maracaibo had already suffered at the hands of the *flibustiers*. While Morgan was winning his reputation at the head of his English buccaneers, the French corsairs from d'Ogeron's new colony at Tortuga and Petit-Goave were profiting almost as much by their audacious ravages. Under the lead of two daring captains, François Nau, nicknamed l'Olonnais, and Michel le Basque, they had raided the Spaniards even up to the walls of Havana, and in the early months of 1667 they had forced their way into the Gulf of Maracaibo and, landing in force, had pillaged all the country round. The city was sacked and burned with appalling cruelties, and even the bells and vestments of the churches were carried off to adorn the chapel of Tortuga. It was said that the *flibustiers* took away booty worth more than 80,000 pieces of eight, but they did vastly more damage, and the Spaniards reckoned it at not less than 1,000,000 pieces of eight. When Morgan arrived in the Gulf in March 1669 he therefore found only an impoverished district that could not supply much plunder. The buccaneers sacked Maracaibo once more, and tortured many of the principal landowners to make them pay ransom, but they reckoned themselves baulked of their expected reward, and if it had not been for a lucky chance, the expedition would hardly have paid for its fitting-out. While Morgan's ships were still in the lake of Maracaibo, he learned that three Spanish warships were waiting for him at its entrance. By a sudden surprise he fell upon them unawares and succeeded in setting the flagship on fire, while he drove the second ashore and captured the third. No quarter was given to the Spaniards and practically the whole of them were destroyed,

though a few escaped to shore. From the burned vessel the buccaneers recovered nearly half of the 40,000 pieces of eight that she had aboard, and Maracaibo was forced to pay a ransom of 20,000 pieces and 500 head of cattle, so that when Morgan returned to Port Royal in May 1669 he had plenty in hand to ensure the complacency of the authorities.

But things were nearing their end, for the Spanish Court, despite all the difficulties that were piled upon it by Louis XIV's attack upon the Netherlands, made such violent protests to Charles II against the proceedings of his governors in the West Indies that stringent orders were at last sent to Modyford to withdraw all his commissions from the buccaneers and to close Port Royal to them (March 1669). Public peace with the Spaniards was proclaimed in June 1669, and it was hoped thus to avert the hostile action against all Englishmen and their commerce that the Queen-Regent had authorised her governors to undertake. A fleet of six heavily armed Spanish ships was sent out to cruise in the Caribbean against the freebooters, but, as was mentioned above, three of them were destroyed by Morgan at Maracaibo and the others could do very little.

Despite the damage caused by the English buccaneers it was, in fact, the designs of France that Spain more feverishly dreaded, for she knew that no reliance was to be placed on Louis's promises and that he was actively engaged in negotiations with the Emperor for the partition of her dominions between them.<sup>1</sup> By the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in April 1668 Louis had been

<sup>1</sup> The first Partition Treaty was signed in Vienna on 20 January 1668 in the utmost secrecy, but there is evidence that its existence, though possibly not its content, was known to the Spanish government a little later.



bought off for the time being by the surrender of territories and fortresses in the Netherlands, but his despatch of a strong fleet of frigates to the Caribbean under the Comte d'Estrées early in 1669 seemed to threaten the possibility of an attack upon the treasure fleets that were still essential, comparatively impoverished though they were as compared with the great days of the past.

There is no doubt that the Spaniards were not mistaken in their fears, for though d'Estrées' orders were nominally confined to the task of preventing evasion of the regulations of the government against the trading of the French colonists with foreigners, he was promising through d'Ogeron countenance to the *flibustiers* if they would confine their refitting and the disposal of their booty to Tortuga, and would act as auxiliaries to the navy if war should break out. Therefore while the English government was being drawn by considerations of general policy to withdraw from connivance in buccaneering, the French were beginning to consider their employment on a wider scale than before.

But the last and greatest of the raids of the English buccaneers was still to come after Charles II and his ministers had seriously set their hands to the policy that necessarily involved their suppression. Before we deal with it, we must shew how that decision had been brought about. We have already stated that in May 1667 Spain consented to a treaty negotiated by Lord Sandwich in Madrid by which, in return for England's promise not to enter into alliance with her enemies, she agreed to permit the products of the English colonies and factories in Asia and America to be imported into Spain and acknowledged England's right to hold American colonies, which she had never done before. Sandwich's treaty was utterly ignored by Modyford,

but the Queen-Regent's threat in April 1669 of a formal proclamation of war beyond the Tropic of Cancer shewed that unless some serious measures were taken to enforce it, England would lose the commercial benefits conceded and our chances of retaining the opportunities of trade that we had won in the Second Dutch War would be imperilled. In May 1669 England, Sweden and the United Netherlands entered into a treaty at The Hague by which they guaranteed the integrity of the Spanish dominions which France had promised to respect by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, and it was the Triple Alliance thus concluded that was the deciding factor.

In the autumn of 1669 Sir William Godolphin, envoy-extraordinary to Madrid, began negotiations for a treaty providing amnesty for the past, good intelligence for the future and a friendly reception of English ships into the ports of Spanish America. He was instructed to refuse to agree to any compensation for Modyford's connivance in the raids of the buccaneers on the ground that the general peace treaty of 1667 did not extend to the Indies, but he did not demand freedom of trade with the Spanish colonies, because that would probably have meant the break-down of the negotiations and the English merchants saw greater opportunities of profit by exporting their goods to the Indies through Spanish ports. Many of those in authority in Spain were strongly opposed to the conclusion of a treaty, for they saw that it meant the definitive abandonment of the exclusive policy for which the Castilian monarchy had been fighting for more than a century. But the necessities of the bankrupt power were so full of menace that their opposition was of no avail, and finally, in July 1670, the plenipotentiaries of the Queen-

Regent consented to Godolphin's hard conditions and signed the Treaty of Madrid that is in a sense one of the principal title-deeds of our West Indian colonies.

By the 3rd article it was agreed that 'both parties shall wholly forbear and abstain from all pillage, depredation, hurt and injury and any sort of molestation, as well by land as by sea or in fresh waters, in whatever part of the world'. By the 4th they agreed to 'revoke all commissions and letters containing powers either of reprisal or marque, or of making prizes in the West Indies', and promised that 'whoever shall contravene this shall be punished, and, in addition to the criminal penalty imposed, they shall be obliged to indemnify the injured subjects who demand it'.

The relinquishment of Spain's ancient claims to monopoly in the New World is contained in the important 7th article, which had no previous parallel and therefore deserves quoting in full.

'VII. All offences, losses, damages and injuries which the English and Spanish nations have, for whatsoever cause or pretext, suffered from each other at any time past, in America, shall be buried in oblivion and completely effaced from memory, as if they had never occurred. Moreover it is agreed that the Most Serene King of Great Britain, his heirs and successors, shall have, hold and possess forever, with full right of sovereignty, ownership and possession, all the lands, regions, islands, colonies and dominions, situated in the West Indies or in any part of America, that the said King of Great Britain and his subjects at present hold and possess; so that neither on that account nor on any other may or should anything ever be further urged or any controversy begun in future'.

Thus at last England's right to territories that she

had effectively occupied for half a century or more was fully recognised in the sphere of international law, and the truth of her contention was thus vindicated that prior discovery gives no valid title to territory, but that recognised possession can only be secured by material and organised occupation.

It was an ironical commentary on the difficulties of securing rapid obedience to orders at a distance from the centre that within a week or two after Godolphin had secured the signature of Spain to his treaty of oblivion the most savage raid the Spanish colonies ever had to suffer was launched from the harbours of Jamaica. In the treaty itself it was provided that ratifications should be exchanged within four months, and this formality was completed by Spain in October 1670; but a time-limit of eight months after ratification was allowed for the proclamation of the treaty in the colonies, and it was not until May 1671 that a messenger from Santo Domingo arrived in Port Royal to present to Governor Modyford the articles of peace and arrange for mutual proclamation and the exchange of prisoners. Thus the article giving oblivion for past offences, which really was negotiated to cover what had gone before the middle of 1670, was stretched by legal technicalities to cover the much more serious outrage upon the Spanish dominions that was committed by Morgan in his expedition for the sack of Panama (December 1670-January 1671).

The Home government's orders to Modyford to cease issuing commissions to buccaneers and to compel them to cease their piracies had, as we have seen, brought about the issue of a proclamation of peace in June 1669, but with farcically ineffective results. The Governor must have smiled when he was signing it, for

he knew that it could not be long before the Spaniards would afford him an excuse for sanctioning another of Morgan's raids on a large scale. In June 1670 two Spanish men-of-war from Santiago de Cuba under the command of a Portuguese, Manuel Rivero Pardal, raided the northern coast of Jamaica, burned several plantations and carried off their slaves and some English prisoners. This raid gave Modyford the excuse he wanted, and at the beginning of July he commissioned Captain Henry Morgan to raise privateers for the defence of the island and to promise them reward 'upon the old pleasing account of no purchase, no pay [so] that all which is got, shall be divided amongst them, according to the accustomed rules'. He received warning from home of Godolphin's negotiations about the middle of August, but this did not restrain him, and it was probably, in fact, too late for him to hold Morgan back. The buccaneers would not have obeyed an order for their recall, and Modyford knew that he was impotent to compel them to do so.

By the end of the month Morgan had a force of ten ships and more than 600 men under his command at Isle la Vache off the south coast of Hispaniola, and during September and October he raided along the Spanish Main and sacked Santa Marta and Rio de la Hacha, from which he obtained a considerable booty of cattle, maize and other provisions for the equipment of the greater expedition that he was planning. Meanwhile other buccaneers had once more penetrated up the San Juan river and sacked the unfortunate city of Granada in Nicaragua for the third time, but Modyford did not restrain them from refitting at Port Royal and proceeding to reinforce Morgan at Isle la Vache. At the beginning of December there were 1800 English

and French buccaneers gathered there with some thirty-six ships, and by the middle of the month Morgan was ready to lead them on the boldest design he had ever attempted.

The first objective was Providence Island, and the Spanish garrison there capitulated without a shot. The governors of Cartagena and Panama knew that Morgan was aiming at the Isthmus, but they were so destitute of munitions and trained forces owing to the lack of reinforcements from Spain that they were reduced to depending upon what local levies they could raise from the surrounding country, and these were almost useless. The strain of many years of war had, in fact, reduced even the most essential strategic point at the very centre of Spain's colonial empire to defencelessness, and this illustrates the depths of impotence to which the once proud mistress of the Indies had sunk.

The President of Panama sent what men he could to strengthen the forts at Puerto Bello and to hold the line of the Chagres river, but they were only a few hundreds, and he well knew his danger. The greater part of the royal treasure in the city was placed aboard two or three ships in the harbour, and most of the principal citizens with their wives and families and the nuns from the convents fled in them to find a refuge from the approaching storm in the islands along the Pacific coast. The buccaneers could not long be held by such defence as could be put by the small garrisons at Puerto Bello and the mouth of the Chagres, and at the end of December an advance party overcame all resistance and made themselves masters of the forts. The way now lay open for the main force, and Morgan sailed in with his fleet from Providence and landed some 1400 men on 9 January 1671. The advance into the interior began by way of

the Chagres river, and the pirates crowded all the boats they could get hold of, leaving no room for provisions. They hoped to live upon the country, but found it everywhere deserted and no food to be had, for the Spaniards had destroyed or carried everything away. The nine days' march through the woods to the crest of the Cordillera were thus a time of starvation, and only Morgan's determination and capacity for leadership carried them through.

At length on the ninth day the buccaneers came to the top of a high mountain from which they saw the South Sea below them, and, descending, they came at last into a fertile valley where they found many cattle and were able to appease their hunger. The next day they came into the plain before the city, and found the Spaniards drawn up in battle array to oppose their further advance. A furious pitched battle took place, in which the citizens attempted to drive herds of wild cattle against their assailants, but Morgan's generalship in outflanking his enemy left victory in the hands of the buccaneers, and many hundreds of the Spaniards were slain. The remainder fled into the city and put up a desperate resistance, but in a few hours it was all over, and Panama, the richest place in the Isthmus, was wholly in the hands of Morgan and his cut-throats. Its fall began an orgy of rapine and cruelty such as surpassed anything even the blood-stained annals of the buccaneers had ever recorded. Most of the houses in the populous city were built of wood and only the churches and convents were of stone, so when the desperate Spaniards set fire to their homes the conflagration rapidly spread and before long little was left but smoking ruins. For twenty-eight days Morgan and his men remained in Panama searching for all the treasure

they could torture the unfortunate inhabitants into revealing to them. Armed parties of buccaneers were sent to round up the fugitives who had taken to the woods, and some of the vessels in the harbour were manned to cruise along the coast and neighbouring islands in the South Sea in search of the ships which had carried off a part of the treasure, but without success.

Some of the buccaneers wished to take to the South Sea and imitate the exploits of Drake along the coasts of Peru and Chile, but Morgan refused to permit them to break away from his force, and at length, with a numerous train of pack animals laden with booty, the whole of the survivors set out on their march back to the northern coast. The President of Panama had hoped to intercept them on the way, but he found it impossible to gather any forces, and ultimately the whole company got back to their ships with very little fighting. Disgraceful and barbarous as the raid had been, it cannot be denied that as an exploit of amazing audacity it stands high in the Caribbean story that for more than a century and a half had been filled with deeds of daring. The last of the great West Indian raids was in many ways the most audacious, and Morgan, scoundrel though he was, must take his place in the line of daring leaders that began more than a century before with 'Jambe de Bois' (Pié de Palo) and Francis Drake. With him the line came to an end, for those who came after were mere vulgar pirates with not even such a thin cloak of pretence of a patriotic purpose to cover their robberies as Morgan had.

The buccaneers returned to Port Royal to divide their spoils in April 1671, and it was calculated that they were worth at least £10,000. The Spaniards reckoned their losses at over 6,000,000 crowns, and Old Panama never rose again from its ashes. The site of the city was



transferred to a better harbour some miles to the west, and only a few piles of stones remain among the dense tropical vegetation as a fitting memorial to the ruin that had descended on the great days of Spain in the Indies. On 31 May 1671 the Council of Jamaica, under Governor Modyford's presidency, set the seal of official sanction on Morgan's exploit by passing a formal vote of thanks to him for the execution of his commission and approving the manner in which he had conducted himself. The vote seemed to make the phrases of Godolphin's treaty of the previous July a hollow mockery, but the harm had been done. Spain could not denounce the treaty, and as the outrage at Panama had been committed during the period of grace allowed, she could claim no compensation or redress for her losses.

Modyford's commission as Governor of Jamaica had been revoked in January 1671, and Sir Thomas Lynch arrived to replace him in June, but it was not until August that the new governor ventured to inform him that he was to return to England under arrest. Even then the proceeding was almost farcical, for Lynch assured his prisoner that his detention was merely a sop to satisfy the Spaniards. Though Modyford was committed to the Tower when he got back to England, he was never brought to trial, and before long he was released to enjoy the illicit gains that he had undoubtedly derived from his complacency towards the buccaneers. Morgan himself lived on in honour in Port Royal as one of the richest men in Jamaica, to be knighted and fêted as a hero when he visited England and to serve as an active and efficient Lieutenant-Governor of Jamaica in later years.

But the days of the buccaneers as an important instrument of English policy were at an end when

Lynch brought out orders for their suppression. France still made use of her *flibustiers*, as we shall see, but even the planters of Jamaica were coming to realise that a prosperous colony could not be built on the precarious gains of piracy, and the West Indian interest at home, in alliance with the great exporting merchants, were determined to prevent further interference with their new policy of attracting the trade of the Spanish Indies into English hands, with Jamaica as one of its principal *entrepôts*.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE INDIES TRADE, 1648-1678

THE exploits of the buccaneers and rivalry for the possession of the various disputed sugar islands make a far larger showing in the records of the seventeenth century than the essential maritime struggle of the time. They lent themselves to description, and their high lights and deep shadows made a far more vivid impression on the writers of the day than the prosaic accounts of commercial rivalry which only gradually shewed its results upon the relative position of the contesting powers. But a broad survey of the period demonstrates that the governing motives of the statesmen of the three maritime powers in formulating their West Indian policy were directed more towards securing the command of the valuable trade in the products of tropical America than to the acquisition of colonial territory or even to the restriction of the trade of their colonies to their own subjects. Those motives were also present and they had a share in directing policy, but in England, France and the Netherlands alike it was believed that whoever could win for himself the trade of the Spanish Indies would make himself master of one of the greatest sources of commercial wealth in the world. In dealing with the policy and war of this involved period we have said little as to the actual carrying on of West Indian trade, and we may therefore turn aside for a moment to note more of it.

Outside Europe and the Mediterranean lands there were in the seventeenth century only two great fields for commercial exploitation. The colonies of settlement in North America were still in their infancy and yielded neither markets for European products nor exports of any particular value. Africa gave only slaves, and the lands of the southern hemisphere were as yet unknown. The East Indies and China yielded valuable products from which great profit could be made, but they afforded no markets for European manufactures and their exports had to be paid for in bullion. But the Spanish Indies and Brazil not only produced an immense variety of raw materials for which there was an ever-increasing demand in Europe; they also afforded an enormous market for manufactured goods that might provide wide opportunities for employment to any nation that could control the trade. This was the prize that had fallen almost wholly into the hands of the Dutch by the middle of the century, and it was this even more than their East Indian trade that aroused the jealousy of England and France and led to the long series of wars against them.

On paper Spain's restrictions of the trade of her colonies to her own subjects were as complete in 1660 as they had been half a century before, but it had long ceased to be possible to enforce them with any degree of completeness, and six times as much trade was done through clandestine channels as passed through the only legitimate portals at Seville and Cadiz. England before the Civil War had possessed a pre-eminent position in the trade of the Peninsula, and though Spanish firms had to be employed as a cover for the trade in colonial products, English capital was behind them, and it was English commercial skill that carried them

on. The Dutch trade was necessarily clandestine down to the Peace of Münster (1648), since no Dutchman could reside in Spain, but when her ports were again opened to them and their English competitors were hampered by the chaotic conditions of the Civil War, the Netherlands monopolised almost all the legitimate trade as they had long done with the illegitimate. When the English merchants after the Restoration were anxious to use the peace with Spain to restore their old commerce, they found themselves everywhere forestalled by Dutch competitors, and the jealousy caused by this had much to do with the bitter national feeling that led to the Second and Third Dutch Wars.

The manner in which foreigners absorbed and controlled the legitimate trade with the Indies belongs more properly to the history of Spanish commerce in general, but we may quote a memorial that was submitted to Colbert in 1670 to shew that the whole elaborate system of trade restriction had become a sham. The foreign merchants traded under the cover of Spanish merchants at Seville who were in reality nothing but their factors. 'All the merchandise that they send to the Indies, is loaded under the name of Spaniards who very often have no knowledge of it, in order to keep the business more secret. Only the supercargo knows about it, and he renders his account after his return from the Indies directly to the merchant who has entrusted the cargo to him in confidence without paying any attention to those in whose names the loadings were made'. The goods loaded were cloths and stuffs of all kinds, tools, metal manufactures and utensils of the finer sort, none of which were made in Spain but had to be imported from the manufacturing countries of the north. The goods came largely from Germany or at second hand

from England and France, while the Dutch were supreme, and it was from their position of middlemen in the West Indies that the other powers strove to oust them.

But Colbert's memorial tells only one side of the story. After about 1640 the sailing of the annual fleets was so irregular and so often intermitted that the Spanish colonists could not have succeeded in getting a fifth part of their produce to Europe if all illicit trading had been stopped. It was here that the Dutch down to the outbreak of war in 1665 had such an overwhelming superiority. A great deal of their success was due to their concentration on the single aim of trade. With minor exceptions in Guiana, they did not concern themselves with planting, and they had no desire to annex territory or found colonies. Curaçao and St. Eustatius were only emporia for slaves and goods, but England and France while they were attempting to win trade had also to watch over the interests of their planters and colonists. This hampered the exertions of their governors and led to a conflict of interests in their councils at home which makes it sometimes difficult to follow clearly the growth of policy. The interests of the two greater powers in world politics were also wider than those of the Netherlands, and their West Indian policy was often diverted from a consistent course by the need to serve the more urgent necessities of European policy.

Down to the outbreak of the Second Dutch War, as we have shewn, their share of West Indian trade of all kinds was preponderant. On their island *entrepôts* of Curaçao and St. Eustatius they had storehouses containing every sort of saleable European commodity, and at Rio de la Hacha, Maracaibo, La Guayra and Puerto Cabello they had regular agents who made arrange-

ments for the import of such consignments as they required. It was found more economical and less risky to bring cargoes wholesale to the *entrepôts* and deal with them locally in smaller parcels as ordered. Nearly all the cocoa and a large part of the specially flavoured tobacco at that time exported from Venezuela passed wholly through the warehouses of Curaçao. St. Eustatius performed a similar function for the indigo and cochineal of Honduras and Campeche, while the trade between the Lesser Antilles in the possession of England and France and the Spanish colonists was almost all carried on in Dutch ships.

The slave-trade had special circumstances of its own, as we have already mentioned incidentally, and these played an important part in the struggle between the rival powers. Down to the time of Holmes' activity on the Guinea Coast the Dutch West Indies Company, from the time when they had ousted the Portuguese, say about 1638 onwards, had almost a complete monopoly, and since they commanded the sources of supply, the Spanish colonists and the French and English planters were compelled to purchase negroes from them and pay their prices. The first to break through the monopoly were English private merchants and later the African Company. By about 1665 all the negroes brought to Barbados, Jamaica and the Leeward Islands came in English ships. Between 4000 and 5000 raw negroes of good quality were delivered annually to Barbados in the 'sixties at an average price of about £17 a head, and they found a ready market among the planters, so that the black population of the island increased at a rapid rate. The French had no share in the Guinea trade at this period, and Martinique and Guadeloupe had to purchase their slaves from the Dutch

or from the neighbouring English plantations, and it was the uncertainty of securing a regular supply when Colbert began to restrict the trade of the islands to French ships that retarded their progress as sugar producers. St. Eustatius was the *entrepôt* for the Dutch trade in the Lesser Antilles, and the merchants usually had a stock of about 1500 negroes on hand. The capture of the island by Modyford's buccaneers in the Second Dutch War badly broke up their trade, and the price of negroes in the French islands rose very greatly.

The demand for negroes by the sugar islands, however, was small compared with that of the Spanish colonies, and it was there that the greatest profits were made. Down to 1640 the holders of the *asiento* or contract for the supply of slaves through legitimate channels were always Portuguese, though probably at least an equal number were smuggled in by the Dutch. Between the outbreak of the Portuguese revolt and 1660 the regular supply of slaves fell into chaos, and the smuggling trade became far more important than the legitimate, but after the Peace of Münster Dutch merchants were often licensed by the provincial governors to sell slaves to the colonists, and in many ways they took the place of the Portuguese experts who had managed the business before 1640.

As was mentioned in an earlier chapter, in 1662 a new and reformed *asiento* was drawn up and sold to two Genoese bankers, Domingo Grillo and Ambrosio Lomelin, for a large sum of ready money. They were granted the sole licence to import negroes, and they contracted to furnish the colonies with 24,000 *piezas d'India* (i.e. parcels of one, two or three slaves each according to value) within a period of seven years. They were per-



mitted to obtain their negroes from the subjects of any power at peace with Spain, but in practice this could only mean the Dutch. The place of purchase was Curaçao, which was used as a great human stock-yard. But the destruction of Dutch commerce in the West Indies between 1665 and 1667 brought the business of the *asientistas* into great confusion, and they could only get their negroes in small numbers from the English islands. The African Company saw its advantage, and poured slaves in large numbers into the Barbados and Jamaica slave-pens, but raised their prices so high that the English planters were only left with refuse and all the strongest of the blacks were shipped across to the Spanish Main. After the war the Dutch worked hard to revive their trade at Curaçao, while the English strove to retain their new position as middlemen, and this was certainly one of the causes of friction that led to the Third Anglo-Dutch War.

In the 'seventies, when peace had at last been made between Spain and Portugal, the Portuguese resumed their working of various *asientos* that were negotiated from time to time, while the Dutch and English were driven back upon the smuggling trade, until at the close of the century the demand for the exclusive *asiento* took its place among the settled objectives of English policy in the West Indies. The results appeared in the well-known article of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) and embittered Anglo-Spanish relations for half a century. The idea of making Jamaica the centre for this as well as other branches of the Indies trade frequently recurs in the despatches of the period, especially after the negotiation of Godolphin's treaty. But it met with unrelenting hostility from the Spanish colonists, who never forgot the outrages they had suffered at the hands of

Morgan and other Jamaican buccaneers. Thus sentiment played a more important part than interest in the history of the time, and the brutalities of the pirates did permanent harm to the nation that had attempted to use them.

## CHAPTER XIX

### PREPARATIONS FOR A NEW WAR, 1667-1672

THE period between the Treaties of Dover (1670) and Nymwegen (1678) is marked by intense rivalry between the powers in the West Indies, but its movements were less tangled than in the seven years preceding the Treaty of Breda (1667). The essential conflict was now that between France and the Dutch, with the other powers somewhat in the background, but in the course of the struggle new actors who had not before appeared in the colonial sphere, Denmark, Brandenburg and Sweden, were brought in to serve the interests of the Netherlands, and in certain cases with results that persisted. The period was really one in which issues in the Caribbean were clarified and the rival colonies settled down into their permanent form with sharp divisions of interests separating them. As the Dutch were cleared out of the way, the irreconcilable antagonism between France and England appeared which was to be the governing factor in the West Indies for a century.

France's Caribbean policy in the period before 1670 was still mainly confined to using the West Indies to bring pressure to bear upon Spain in Europe, and after that date down to the Peace of Nymwegen in 1678 in a determined effort to ruin the Dutch. Louis XIV realised that he would not reap the profit alone, for a large part of the spoils of trade must pass to England, but he was

prepared to acquiesce, for he believed that he could in return rely upon Charles II's complacency in the anti-Spanish designs which were his ultimate aim. In the secret negotiations that Charles entered into without the knowledge of his ministers, he shewed plainly that the reward he demanded for his assistance to Louis to secure the reversion to the Spanish monarchy was Spanish America and its trade. Louis had already in his Partition treaty with the Emperor (1668) agreed that on the death of the frail young King of Spain without heirs, the Indies should fall to the Emperor's share, but he knew that there would be no difficulty in arranging for compensation in Europe, for the Austrians had no colonial ambitions. In the secret Treaty of Dover (signed 1 June 1670 but not made known even in part to Charles's ministers until re-signed on 21 December 1671) these arrangements as to the Spanish succession were recorded in veiled terms, but also Charles in return for a subsidy agreed to support France in a new war against the Dutch, and it was this provision and its fulfilment some eighteen months later that had a direct influence upon West Indian affairs. Once more England was contending for commercial superiority in the Caribbean, and for the last time in alliance with France. But the hatred that had persisted between the English and the French colonies since the previous war prevented any whole-hearted co-operation, and France was mainly left to fight the Dutch alone while English merchants benefited by replacing them in the illicit trade.

The cause of the persistence of hostility was closely bound up with the provisions of the Treaty of Breda for the return of the French conquests in St. Christopher. They had restored Antigua and Montserrat to the English planters without making much difficulty, but

it took three years before the French would retire from the English quarters in St. Christopher, and, before they did so, they stripped the plantations bare and demanded excessive compensation from the Englishmen who had been expropriated. This left lasting memories of bitter feeling in the Leeward Islands and made it impossible to effect any exchange such as was suggested from each side in turn. It also led to an objection on the part of the English planters in the Leeward Islands to being governed from Barbados, and this was at length successful. Thus after 1670 there was a considerable divergence of interest between the planters in the various English islands, and the French colonies began to eclipse them in importance. The actual separation may be dated from the appointment of Colonel William Stapleton as Governor-in-Chief of the Leeward Islands in 1672. Henceforward there were three independent governments among the English colonies in the Caribbean, Jamaica, Barbados and the Leeward Islands, each having its own special interests in international policy.

Jamaica knew little of the French or Dutch, but was in the forefront of English dealings with the Spanish Indies. Sir Thomas Lynch, the new lieutenant-governor who succeeded Modyford, was ordered to proclaim the conditions of Godolphin's treaty and to offer a free pardon to any buccaneers who would come in and take service in the navy or begin planting. An English convoy was sent to Cartagena in August 1670 to arrange for the exchange of prisoners and discuss the possibility of supplying negroes to the Spaniards under licence. But some of the rovers refused to come in on any conditions, and continued their raids along the coast of Cuba, carrying their prizes into Tortuga for disposal.

When they were caught by the exertions of the few frigates at the Governor's disposal, it was almost impossible to secure their conviction for piracy, for though they were notoriously guilty, no jury of Jamaicans would give a verdict against them. As we have seen, when Morgan returned from his raid on Panama he was bravely welcomed in the colony, and though according to orders he was sent prisoner to England in 1672, his confinement was merely nominal and he was treated as a hero when he reached London.

The true fact was that generations of wrong committed on either side during 100 years of fighting could not be forgotten or forgiven in a day, whatever might be arranged in London or Madrid. The Spanish governors of Cartagena or Santo Domingo did not trust either English honesty or good faith, and the misdeeds of every buccaneer and pirate who sailed from Tortuga were put down to the duplicity of the Governor of Jamaica. The Spaniards countered by employing Dutch buccaneers and Portuguese adventurers to pursue and eject English raiders. The prisoners they captured were treated with great severity and often sent back to Spain to serve in the galleys or among the convicts in the dreadful quicksilver-mines.

When the buccaneers found piracy too dangerous, they took to logwood-cutting. This was the first purpose of the occupation of Tortuga, but when the forests of that island and those that were easily accessible in Hispaniola were cut out, they sought the better wood that came from Campeachy in the peninsula of Yucatan. Their principal gathering-ground was in the very depths of the Gulf of Mexico at a place called Triste. This was in a low-lying region that was far removed from any Spanish centre, and there the buccaneers turned log-

wood-cutters formed a real settlement. At many other places round the coast of Yucatan and on the Moskito Coast there were lesser parties, and notably on the creeks near the Belize river on the coast between the provinces of Honduras and Guatemala. The Spanish government protested strongly against what they called the stealing of cargoes from their woods, but neither the Governor of Jamaica nor the English ministers would yield any satisfaction. Provided the logwood-cutters did not approach any of the regions in effective Spanish occupation and did not engage in piracy, they were allowed to bring their cargoes to Jamaica and a valuable and regular trade sprang up after 1670. The cutters also turned their attention to other than dye-woods and for the first time began to cut and export the valuable mahogany. The employment by the Spaniards of corsairs to act against them made the trade very dangerous and successive governors compelled the logwood vessels to sail in company so as to defend themselves against attack.

There were constant accusations against some of those in influential positions in Jamaica of continuing to foster buccaneering against the Spaniards, and Lord Vaughan, the governor who had been sent out with the especial purpose of suppressing it, accused his deputy-governor, Sir Henry Morgan, of still having heavy financial interests in his old trade though he had to conceal them by covering the ships with French commissions and encouraging them to make their base at Tortuga. D'Ogeron's colony, in fact, took the place of Jamaica, for the French saw advantages for their defence in continuing to protect the *flibustiers*. Under the conciliatory régime of d'Ogeron French St. Domingue was before 1670 steadily rising in importance and threaten-

ing to absorb the whole of the western end of Hispaniola. But planters, *flibustiers* and *boucaniers* alike refused to obey Colbert's stringent orders to cease trading with the Dutch. They obtained all their stores and negroes from them and sold to them the tobacco and ginger that were still their principal produce, for sugar cultivation had not yet begun on any considerable scale in St. Domingue.

By the employment of a regular squadron of frigates of the navy under de Gabaret, Colbert had succeeded in driving the Dutch traders from the Lesser Antilles belonging to France, but Hispaniola lay so far to leeward that they could not control shipping there, and when d'Ogeron attempted to enforce his orders, the colonists, under Dutch prompting, broke into revolt. Port de Paix, Port Français, Léogane, Petit-Goave and all the lesser settlements along the coast that he had founded rose against the governor, and only Tortuga remained obedient to his orders. Dutch ships soon got wind of what was happening and steered for Hispaniola, where a thriving business awaited them. But to permit the restrictions to be cast aside wholesale would be fatal to Colbert's determined policy, and de Gabaret's squadron was despatched in haste from the Leeward Islands to bring the rebels to obedience and to arrest all Dutch ships found in the island ports. The show of disciplined force was sufficient to accomplish its purpose, and in a short time full control was again in the hands of the governor. In their reports to Colbert both d'Ogeron and de Gabaret were agreed as to the cause of the rebellion. It 'occurred', they wrote, 'only by reason of the regulation which forbade trade with foreigners. Thus it is certain that if the Dutch had not come to trade and made strong appeals to the inhabitants



to do so, the revolt would not have occurred.' The rebellious and insolent spirit of the colonists came from the fact that they were sure of a better market with the foreigners than they could find with the French merchants to whom the Crown was determined to restrict their trade. An agent of the Dutch West India Company had established himself in Jamaica and offered good prices to the inhabitants of St. Domingue for all their produce. He had made a contract with them for everything they could supply by which he agreed to transport it to Holland and in return to bring every year a quantity of negroes and all sorts of merchandise at reasonable prices. This agreement had made the planters believe that they could be quite independent of France and resist all attacks against them.

Colbert learned of these direct attempts of the Dutch to foment rebellion in a French colony in March 1671, and they aided to confirm him and his master in their determination that the menace to their plans for a self-contained French colonial empire must be met by stern and immediate action. They knew that Dutch trade in the Indies was already in a very bad way owing to English competition and the stricter enforcement of the Navigation Acts, and they were informed by their agents in the islands that the quantity of merchandise at St. Eustatius was so great that the Dutch did not know what to do with it but to smuggle it at very low prices into Nevis, Montserrat and Antigua. 'The Dutch', wrote one of the French governors, 'will certainly be ruined as far as the islands are concerned, if the policy of excluding them is strongly enforced, for they will be obliged to see their merchandise perish or send it back to Europe, and in addition they will be forced to send their vessels away without any cargo whatever' (*Du*

*Lion, Governor of Gaudeloupe, to Colbert, 29 March 1670*). The time was clearly ripe, therefore, in the West Indies for the application of that vigorous action against the United Provinces on which Louis had already determined in Europe.

It was the opposition of the States-General that prevented Louis XIV from accomplishing the full extent of his ambitious designs against the Spanish Netherlands during the War of Devolution, and immediately after its close he determined to encompass the downfall of the Dutch as a great power. They had found support in the Triple Alliance to secure the due observance of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1668) and preserve the integrity of the Spanish dominions, but Louis knew how slight were the threads of common interest binding the allies together, and he set to work to dissolve them and bring England over to his side. 'To mortify the pride of the States-General and abase the power of a nation blackened by ingratitude towards its founders' was henceforward the settled aim of *le roi soleil* whose schemes of aggrandisement at the expense of Spain the Dutch had thwarted.

Louis' coldly calculating minister was little moved by thoughts of revenge, but only of direct advantage. But he too saw the Dutch as the essential obstacle to his designs. Wherever he looked to find a means of increasing France's commerce, he found a network of threads centring in Holland and shutting her out from access to those sources of profit across the ocean from which Colbert hoped to draw fresh stores of national wealth. 'The Hollanders', wrote one of his agents, 'measure all the foreigners with whom they have to deal by the standard of their riches and the profit they can make out of them. They admire or despise them in

proportion to their usefulness or the losses they suffer by dealing with them. The rigging of the Dutchmen's ships which voyage incessantly from the new world to the old groans rather under the burden of their greed than with the bellying of the winds. Believing themselves all-powerful because of their vast riches, they are measureless in their arrogant desire to thwart the prosperity of others.'

Thus the territorial ambition of *le grand monarque* and the schemes of his agent who calculated national rivalries in terms of business competition coincided in their aim against a single antagonist. The way to Flanders and the Indies trade alike lay through Amsterdam, and Louis pursued it relentlessly until the Dutch had been driven from the ranks of the leading powers and their commerce in the West Indies reduced to a tithe of its former greatness. They had boasted the strongest navy in the world, but it was by his armies rather than by his fleets that Louis achieved his purpose. The result was the same. It was more by their defeats upon the battle-fields of Flanders than by their direct losses in the Caribbean that the downfall of the Hollanders in the West Indies was accomplished, but it was all one. The result was achieved, but to the bitter disappointment of those who had striven for it. It was not to France but to the English that the profit oversea passed, and when his enemy was abased Louis only found that he had raised up a new and more powerful antagonist to block his way to the inheritance of the Indies.

In dealing with Charles II's negotiations for the secret Treaty of Dover most historians have laid emphasis on the clauses dealing with his promise to embrace the Roman Catholic faith and Louis' promise

of a subsidy. The subtler articles have usually been somewhat neglected, but it was they that indicated the policy that lay behind the treaty and involved more than the serving of merely selfish ends. Now that he was free of Clarendon's tutelage, Charles was resolved to return to the old Stuart policy of trying to secure more by the favour of Spain than could be wrested from her by the Elizabethan-Cromwellian policy of predatory war. His new insistence upon the cessation of his governor's complacency towards the buccaneers and his furtherance of Fanshawe's and Godolphin's negotiations for a comprehensive commercial treaty were sufficient indications of his decision and there were very good reasons for it. When it seemed clear to many observers that the Spanish Empire must before long be broken up and the West Indies pass to new masters, it was a logical and practical policy for England to aim at thrusting the Dutch aside for good and all and taking their place as the carriers of the merchandise of the Indies.

That France was likely to be our dangerous rival for Spanish business did not yet appear as unmistakably as it did later, and it is probable that Charles was persuaded that if he would aid Louis to achieve his territorial ambitions in Europe, he might look forward in return to French benevolence when the territories of the Indies came to be divided, as they must be when the ailing boy upon the Spanish throne passed from the scene as the last direct male heir of Philip II. When the greater part of the secret agreements was revealed in February 1672, it was arguments such as these that were used to convince the nation of the advantages England would derive from a new Dutch war, and they were sufficient to win at first a good deal of popularity for the royal policy.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE THIRD DUTCH WAR, 1672-1678

SUCH was the general outlook when in the spring of 1672 Charles and Louis declared war upon the United Provinces, and a great French army under Turenne was thrown against the land frontiers of the Republic. In the West Indies the new allies were none too friendly, for the grievances over the return of St. Christopher still rankled, and the French were very chagrined when Governor Stapleton anticipated them and seized St. Eustatius with his militia from Nevis. But in May 1673 a Dutch fleet under Vice-Admiral Cornelis Evertsen made its appearance in the Leeward Islands, and, having threatened Montserrat, attempted to carry off various English ships from the roadstead of Nevis. He was driven off and passed on to bombard and recapture St. Eustatius. But it was impossible for him to recover the great masses of merchandise that the English had carried off as prize, and soon after Evertsen sailed away again the island fell once more into Stapleton's hands.

Jean Charles de Baas, Lieutenant-General of the French Antilles, had prepared a strong squadron for an expedition against Curaçao before Evertsen's appearance and had taken a large part of the defence forces of Martinique with him to serve as a landing party. But though he succeeded in landing in the island he found its port so strongly fortified both on the landward and

the seaward side that nothing but the regular operations of a siege could reduce it, and de Baas was forced to abandon the enterprise (March 1673) and return in haste to protect Martinique. D'Ogeron had promised to assist with a force of *flibustiers* from St. Domingue, but he was unable to do so, for they were shipwrecked on the coast of Puerto Rico and fell into the hands of the Spaniards and were severely treated as pirates.

The Dutch squadron appeared off Martinique in June 1673, but it was only a reconnaissance, for the island was now too strongly fortified to be attacked by any but a very powerful force. With nothing but this disappointing intelligence to reward him for his exertions Evertsen had to return home. He was luckily not brought to action, for there were at the time no English naval forces in Caribbean waters and de Baas would not risk his ships from under the shelter of his batteries. The Dutch privateers succeeded in sweeping French commerce from Caribbean waters, and the losses suffered from their attacks so crippled the Company of the Indies that it was reduced to final bankruptcy and had to be dissolved.

In European waters the war had gone badly for the allies, for though de Ruyter had not succeeded in defeating their fleets, their co-operation had been so imperfect and the jealousies between the English and the French commanders so acute that they had completely failed in the design of landing a large force upon the Dutch coast, and were unable to achieve anything decisive against the Netherlands' fleets. The deadlock was resolved at last, however, not as the result of the operations, but by a dramatic change in the political circumstances of two of the contestants.

Charles II had formally agreed with Louis in July

1672 that neither would make peace with the States-General except with the other's consent, but the opposition in England, who were secretly in negotiation with Prince William of Orange (afterwards William III), the new Stadholder, raised such a storm against his administration that he had to bow before it. William saw in Louis XIV the arch-enemy and already was beginning upon that far-seeing policy of uniting England and Holland in unrelenting opposition to France which he was to make his life's work. The story of the troubled negotiations of the time belongs to English and European history and need not be dealt with here. But there is one side of them which is sometimes overlooked, though it is of direct bearing upon our theme.

Ever since the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1668) Spain had feared a new attack by Louis on her territories in the Low Countries and had drawn towards the United Provinces for mutual defence. When England and France took up arms in 1672 she was convinced that it would be her turn to be attacked in the Indies in full force when the Dutch had been crushed. To guard against the danger, Spain therefore persuaded the Emperor to join with her in making treaties with the Dutch for the mutual guarantee of possessions, commercial rights and freedom of navigation both within and without Europe (November 1673). It was agreed that Spain should break with England and declare war upon her and France if she would not consent to accept the peace terms offered by the United Provinces. She tried to persuade the Dutch to co-operate with her in the Indies with a joint fleet for the reconquest of Jamaica, and it was a knowledge of these negotiations and the danger to English trade with the Spanish Indies that, added to the pressure of his domestic situation,

forced Charles to disregard his pledge to Louis and make a separate peace with the Dutch. The States-General empowered the Spanish ambassador in London to conduct the preliminary negotiations, and finally, in February 1674, England and the United Provinces came to an agreement and signed a treaty of peace at Westminster.

By this Treaty of Westminster the Peace of Breda was confirmed as governing the general relations between the two powers. English precedence at sea was admitted and a heavy indemnity for English losses was paid by the States-General. They were willing to do this in return for English acceptance of Dutch predominance in the trade of the East Indies, which they regarded as of vital importance. There was to be a mutual restitution of all conquests, but the Dutch did not wish for the immediate return of the islands of St. Eustatius and Saba, for that would lay them open to attack by the French. They remained in English hands, accordingly, till 1678. The Treaty of Westminster supplements the Treaty of Breda, as conclusively marking the change in the relative position of the powers and foreshadowing the alignments of international politics that were to persist. The Dutch diplomatists had been extraordinarily successful, for they had guarded their East Indian commerce by bringing over England and their African and West Indian trade by agreement with Spain. They had, too, brought in Denmark and the Elector of Brandenburg on their side besides the Emperor. But those monarchs had no real interest in the maritime sphere where most of the interests of the Dutch were bound up. Besides, each of these diplomatic successes had had to be purchased at ruinous cost, and in many cases, as in Africa, the appearance of success was delusive.



The negotiations at Westminster were the last in which the United Provinces played the acknowledged part of a leading power. Henceforward they were glad to follow in the wake of England and use her to protect the remains of their holdings in the Indies. Spain, too, had shewn herself anxious to enlist English support, and in both cases it was the danger of the growing power of France that was dreaded. The treaty marks the final divergence of English and French policy and interests in the colonial sphere. Henceforward their rivalry came to be looked upon as one of the fundamental axioms of international politics, and it is interesting to note that it immediately coincided with the opening of the active career of William of Orange.

The defection of England left France alone to deal with the Dutch at sea. The prospects for her possessions oversea looked dark, for her navy was the weaker in material and her sailors in skill, while de Ruyter, admittedly the finest seaman in the world, had his fleets well armed and efficiently manned. For the first time a maritime power planned to relieve the pressure of a land power in Europe by a sudden and overwhelming attack upon her colonial possessions. De Ruyter, after the last indecisive battle in the Narrow Seas (Texel, 21 August 1673), determined that the best way to break the deadlock was to carry the war into new waters and attack the French West Indies in force. Such a diversion was often tried in the wars of the eighteenth century, but it was de Ruyter's strategical skill that first imagined it. The centre of French power in the Antilles was the island of Martinique, whose population of 5000 Frenchmen exceeded the entire white population in all the other islands—Guadeloupe, Marie-Galante, St. Martin, St. Bartholomew, Sainte-Croix and Grenada—put to-

gether. It was against Martinique, therefore, that de Ruyter resolved to launch his attack. He assembled a fleet of forty-eight ships with between 7000 and 8000 men (4336 sailors, 3386 soldiers, 1142 guns) and reached the West Indies in the middle of July 1674. But Governor de Baas had already been warned of the approaching attack by a fast despatch-boat and had put Martinique into a good state of defence. All the French vessels on the station had been taken up into the safe harbour under Fort Royal, and that and the other forts were well garrisoned and guarded by additional earthworks. On 20 July de Ruyter landed strong forces and attempted to approach the forts, but he found it impossible to get near to them under cover and he was compelled to launch a frontal attack against their powerfully manned trenches. The assault was extremely costly to the Hollanders, for they were met by a raking fire on three sides. Where they had expected an easy victory, they had found an unassailable citadel, and it completely ruined de Ruyter's plan of campaign. He had lost so heavily in killed and wounded, and he saw so little opportunity of retrieving his defeat without lengthy operations for which he was unprovided that he re-embarked his remaining men and sailed directly back to Europe. He knew that if he remained in the Antilles, the coasts of Holland would be uncovered and the Republic would have insufficient forces to guard her Mediterranean and East India convoys against the French privateers. The risk was too great, and nothing remained but to accept defeat.

It was impossible for the States-General to undertake further operations on a large scale in the West Indies, for the energies of their sailors were fully occupied in the Mediterranean. The Dutch West India Company,

too, had finally been brought to ruin by the war and dissolved in bankruptcy. For the time being only individual Dutch privateers were able to sail the Caribbean, but in March 1675 two of them with about 100 rovers suddenly attacked the French settlers in Grenada and made themselves masters of the small colony. They had not been long in possession, however, when a French war vessel appeared and after a hard fight captured almost all the privateers. In 1676 a small Dutch squadron was sent to the West Indies under the command of Jacob Binckes. Fort St. Louis, which guarded the French colony in Cayenne, was soon taken, as was the small island of Marie-Galante, but St. Martin was successful in beating off the assailants and they lost three of their ships in an engagement with the Governor of Guadeloupe off Nevis. The remaining five passed on to the coast of Hispaniola, where they hoped to stir up the colonists of St. Domingue to a new revolt. But in this hope they were disappointed. In a fight off Petit-Goave they destroyed some armed French merchantmen that opposed them, but the Governor of Tortuga arrived with reinforcements to aid in the defence of the settlement and the Hollanders were driven off.

Tobago still remained in Dutch hands and Binckes made it his base for the preparation of an attack on Sainte-Croix with the aid of the Caribs from St. Vincent and Dominica. However, the Comte d'Estrées was sent from France with a strong fleet in the autumn of 1676 and Cayenne was soon recaptured. The Dutch garrison were taken prisoners and d'Estrées passed on to Martinique to prepare for an attack on Binckes at Tobago. He had ten ships against the Dutchman's twelve, but approximately only the same weight of metal. The French appeared in the roadstead of Tobago on 3 March

1677 and found their enemies awaiting them. A terrific combat followed in which there was little manœuvring but rather a hand-to-hand sea fight of the old type. Both sides suffered heavily and d'Estrées had at last to sheer off with his badly battered fleet, leaving Tobago still in Dutch hands. But their squadron was almost completely destroyed and the command of the sea remained with the French. Only some half-dozen Dutch privateers still were afloat in the Caribbean, but so long as they were at large it was impossible to consider the French colonies safe from raids upon their coasts and their supplies.

A new fleet was sent out from France under the command of d'Estrées in the autumn of 1677, and he proceeded first to attack the Dutch forts and factory at Goree at the mouth of the Senegal, which was one of their principal bases for the African trade. Goree was captured in October, and d'Estrées passed across the Atlantic to deliver a new attack upon Tobago. This time there was no Dutch fleet to defend it and at the beginning of December, after a fierce bombardment, the colony was compelled to surrender. Of all the Dutch possessions in the Caribbean only Curaçao remained in their hands, and thither d'Estrées turned next.

Knowing the great strength of the Dutch fortress, the French desired to assemble all the forces they could for the enterprise, and they offered liberal terms to the buccaneers who had disdained to accept the offers of pardon proclaimed by the Governor of Jamaica. Several Englishmen took service with French commissions and d'Estrées had many of them in his company when he sailed for Curaçao at the beginning of May 1678. To increase his forces to the maximum he denuded the

French islands of all their defence at sea, and this gave rise to an unexpected result.

We have already spoken of the neutrality agreements that had from time to time been made between the English and the French governors in the Leeward Islands. After the last war it seemed unlikely that such an agreement would again be possible, and the arrival of d'Estrées' strong fleet in the West Indies caused the English great anxiety, for in St. Christopher they were now in a decided position of inferiority. Sir William Stapleton was therefore both relieved and surprised when in April 1678 he received from the French governor an offer to negotiate a new agreement of neutrality. Of course he accepted with alacrity, and on the day of d'Estrées' sailing for Curaçao the agreement was signed. It was sent to Europe for ratification by the respective governments, but after much haggling neither would accept it. The French demanded the inclusion of Barbados and Jamaica in the neutrality as well as the Leeward Islands, but England would not agree. However, by the time the wrangling was over, the pact had served its purpose, for it had prevented an English attack on the lesser French colonies while they were defenceless owing to the Curaçao expedition.

The fate of that venture was disastrous. Approaching the island from the east, the fleet came near to the reefs and shoals surrounding the small Isles of Aves some sixty miles away from the objective. There, owing either to some misunderstanding of orders or, as one story ran, to their being decoyed among the reefs by some shallow-draught Dutch privateers, most of the heavy French men-of-war piled themselves up on the hidden coral and were battered into total wrecks. Hundreds of the sailors and marines with which the ships were crowded

were drowned in the heavy surf. The ships of the *flibustiers* were of shallower draught and most of them escaped, but they refused to come to the Vice-Admiral's assistance or to help him to continue his plan against Curaçao. He only succeeded in taking back with him to Hispaniola a fraction of his fleet, for seven ships of the line, three transports and three *flibustier* ships had been lost with 500 guns and more than 500 of France's best sailors drowned. The disaster was so complete that d'Estrées decided to return at once to France, leaving to the *flibustiers* the defence of the colonies against any Dutch attempts.

Thus for the time being the command of the sea was wholly in the hands of the buccaneers and they took full advantage of it, as we shall shew in a subsequent chapter. They knew that they were not strong or united enough to attack Curaçao, but the Spanish Main was practically defenceless, and after 1678 it suffered more terribly than ever at the hands of de Grammont and his *flibustiers*.

With d'Estrées' departure the regular operations against the Dutch in the West Indies came to an end, but events in Europe had already given France a complete victory. Though William of Orange, in command of the armies of the Netherlands, was already shewing his greatness as a general, he was consistently beaten and the French arms covered with glory. At sea, too, France had resounding success. Dashing privateers like Jean Bart, Abraham Duquesne and the Chevalier de Château-Renault swept the waters of the Channel and the Bay of Biscay and their many prizes caused enormous losses to Dutch commerce. Thus the usual line of communications of the Dutch West Indies trade was cut at both ends, as they had

served the Spaniards at the beginning of the century. Cargoes could neither come in nor out with safety, and the *entrepôt* trade of Amsterdam was at a standstill. The United Provinces were clearly at the end of their resources and had to consent to whatever terms Louis thought fit to impose.

On 10 August 1678 two treaties were signed at Nymwegen, by the first of which it was agreed that each party should retain all the places then in its possession, and by the second or commercial treaty freedom of commerce and navigation was guaranteed, *but in Europe only*. A month later Spain too was compelled to sign a like disadvantageous peace which extended only to hostilities in Europe and made no mention of the Indies. This omission was designed by Louis and had important consequences in the Caribbean. Goree and the other Dutch posts on the Senegal being in French hands were retained, and Louis thus commanded not only the valuable gum-trade which was important for the rising French silk manufactures, but also had unrestricted access at last to the sources of the slaves which were so essential an item in his West Indian policy. These African posts, however, were not readily forsaken by the Hollanders, as will appear later.

By the treaties of Breda (1667) and Westminster (1674) the Dutch had had to accept as definitive their exclusion from the trade of the British colonies, but when the French at Nymwegen utterly refused to recognise an 'open door' for commerce in the West Indies, it was even a more serious blow, for most of the products of the French colonies had been carried in Dutch ships. The last ally of the United Provinces left in the war was the Elector of Brandenburg, whose colonial enterprises had been started very much as a

cover for Dutch merchants. At first they had hopes of continuing their trade under his auspices, but at length when peace was signed between France and Brandenburg in 1679, the same restrictive provisions were included and freedom of maritime commerce was ostentatiously omitted, as in the earlier instruments. Thus while old Dutch enterprises were cut down and stifled, the new schemes of the Brandenburgers and the Danes were checked at birth. The Nymwegen settlement is therefore an important landmark in the history of the West Indies, for it marked a further stage in the struggle for the Spanish heritage. England and France alone were to be in the front rank of the contending powers.



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE COMING OF THE BRANDENBURGERS AND THE DANES, 1673-1683

BY the Treaty of Nymwegen, as we have seen, Louis XIV agreed to bring the war in Europe to an end, but almost immediately afterwards he ostentatiously made it known that his promise of peace to Spain did not extend to the Indies. There he permitted and even encouraged the governors of the French Antilles to allow the fitting out of buccaneering enterprises and the preparation of expeditions against the Spanish colonies by adventurers of all nations. The policy thus adopted was deliberate and had the intention of frightening the Spaniards into granting France a privileged position to the exclusion of the Dutch and the English. Irregular war was in fact designed to gain a commercial end, and Colbert was as usual logically systematic in his plan.

In his orders to the naval officer who was sent to supervise the salvage of the wrecks at the Isles of Aves Colbert was entirely explicit as to the policy of his master. 'The King', he wrote, 'ordered me to write to you these lines on a very important matter which must be kept very secret. Peace being made with Spain in Europe, but not in other parts of the world, it may be that some day his Majesty will take the resolution to trouble the great and free commerce that the Spaniards have in the West Indies. In order to put yourself in a

position to execute his Majesty's orders, he wishes you to pay particular care during your voyage to know surely and exactly the precise times of the departure of the *flotas* and the galleons from the coast of Spain; the precise navigation they pursue; what route they keep; what islands or mainland they touch at; what is the fighting force of the galleons; if they are in a state to fight; and the number of the King's ships that ought to be armed to undertake an enterprise against them' (*Colbert to de Gabaret*, 30 September 1678).

Since for the time being it was impossible to use military force in Europe to make Spain a humble vassal of France, pressure might be applied instead in the Indies, and not only her rulers kept pliable but also a lucrative commercial end attained. The intermingling of political and commercial aims at this period is a noticeable point in the voluminous correspondence and memorials wherein the growth of Louis XIV's policy may be studied.

The first requirement, if he were to understand the problem of West Indian strategy as Louis wished to, was a thorough reconnaissance of the objectives to be attacked. Obviously the person most fitted to advise was the experienced naval officer who had led the French fleets during the war, and d'Estrées in reply to the instructions given him set down succinctly for the King's information the strategical conditions of the Caribbean as he saw them.

He indicated three essential points as the first objects of attack, since upon them the whole organisation of the Spanish Indies depended. Santo Domingo, he said, was the seat of the central government, Santa Marta commanded the approach to the silver route across the Isthmus through Puerto Bello, while Havana guarded

the exit from the Caribbean into the Atlantic. A power that could hold these points, said he, would control all the trade of the Indies. But there d'Estrées stopped, for he could not see the other essential of the strategical problem, since the lessons that revealed it had still to be learned.

It was not until after the great naval lessons of the war of 1689-97 that it was realised that a power that would employ a well-armed and disciplined cruising squadron, and that kept its crews in health and well supplied, would hold the command of the sea and forbid its passage to the enemy. Menendez had realised this cardinal strategic fact in the middle of the sixteenth century and had exposed it clearly in his letters to Philip II, but that great strategist was before his time, and his writings were entirely unknown. Hawkins, too, had explained the fundamental strategy to Burghley, but it was in secret state papers that were not published until our own day, so that his sage advice was unknown to later generations.

D'Estrées followed the traditional ideas which had been prevalent since the days of Drake. He wished to save the necessarily considerable expense that would be involved in maintaining a permanent squadron of navy ships, and believed that he could attain the desired end of putting pressure on Spain by making up his fleets with auxiliaries from among the *flibustiers* and permitting others of them to carry out raids against the Spanish ports. For his immediate purpose he recommended their use under the Sieur de Grammont as pilots and assistants of a royal squadron for a reconnaissance in force of the vulnerability of the three principal strategic points in Spanish hands, and he advised that the English bases in Nevis and Jamaica should also be reconnoitred, since England might come to the aid of

Spain if war should result. D'Estrées was under no delusions that the flagrant spying that he was planning was anything but a cynical disregard for the sovereign rights of another power. That Spain might be thrust into the arms of England was obvious, and we shall see later that this was the actual result when we consider the Treaty of Windsor of 1680.

D'Estrées' memoir was accepted by the King and his plan approved. In 1679 he was again despatched to the West Indies in command of a fine force of eleven ships, of which seven were powerful and heavily armed vessels. The arrival of his fleet in the Caribbean caused a great sensation, for no one could be certain against whom it was directed. Visits, ostensibly of courtesy, were paid to Nevis and Jamaica, but the colonists were so much in doubt of d'Estrées' intentions that they were careful to keep their forts fully manned. The Spanish governors were in less doubt, but even when French engineer officers were sent to make drawings of their fortifications under the pretext of exchanging prisoners, they did not dare to take action.

His reconnaissance completed, d'Estrées was not long in finding an excuse for attack. One of his auxiliary vessels having been seized as a pirate by the Spanish coast-guards off Puerto Bello early in 1680, he appeared in force off Santo Domingo to demand compensation and the release of the prisoners. Thence on the same pretext he sailed across to Santa Marta, which he found entirely abandoned, for the whole of the inhabitants had fled to the hills. At Cartagena the governor, in face of such an imposing force, could do nothing but submit and release all the *fibustiers* in his hands while the Frenchmen coolly made plans of his defences and took part in his ceremonial hospitality.

Meanwhile de Grammont with old commissions of reprisals from the Governor of St. Domingue was raiding along the coast of Venezuela with impunity. In the summer of 1680, while the Admiral was insisting on all the niceties of international comity and claiming compensation for their breach, the leader of the *flibustiers* was seizing the port of La Guayra and holding the country round to ransom with all the traditional barbarities of the pirates. The situation was anarchical, for when the Spanish governors attempted to use armed *guarda costas* to protect themselves against the atrocious ravages of the corsairs, they found themselves faced by d'Estrées' demands for reparations; yet if they protested against the robberies of the *flibustiers*, the French authorities disclaimed any responsibility for the actions of the outlaws and refused to accept the duty of controlling them.

In December 1680 d'Estrées completed his task of reconnoitring the state of the Spanish possessions by a visit to Trinidad and the mouth of the Orinoco, ostensibly to secure reparation for the actions of certain *guarda costas*. He could get no satisfaction, for there were but a few poor Spanish planters in the island, but he was able to round off his information and was now in a position to supply the King with a full report of the weakness of his victims. It shewed clearly that he understood the purpose for which he had been despatched.

'The information we have gained in the last two campaigns', he wrote, 'is so certain that it has put us in a position to capture the strongest places in America with quite small forces and at very little expense. I am persuaded of the weakness of the Spaniards. What I have seen confirms me in the idea that we can oblige them to grant us a share of the riches of the Indies, for

I doubt if they are able to fortify themselves in the South Sea. If there were a revolution in the Spanish monarchy, [I believe] that those peoples [of the Indies] would choose the dominion of the King [of France] rather than that of any other prince.'

In these phrases d'Estrées reveals unmistakably the cause of Louis XIV's interest in the West Indies. The Caribbean region was playing an essential part in schemes of high world policy, and to this we shall return later. But also intermingled with these schemes were the immediate plans for winning the Spanish American trade, and here new competitors were appearing on the scene.

Even when England had dropped out of the Dutch war in 1674, France was left with so great a superiority of force that her enemies had to seek for every means of maintaining themselves. The pressure of the French privateers upon the Netherlands' commerce drove them to shelter their cargoes under neutral flags, while the diminution of opportunities at home induced many ambitious Dutchmen to seek employment under foreign powers to whom their knowledge and experience of oceanic trade might be valuable. The first of these powers was Denmark, whose trade was already largely in Dutch hands. Earlier in the century, under Christian IV, she had attempted to share in colonial expansion, but her efforts had produced no results owing to her lack of population and her absorption in the Thirty Years' War. But about 1670 certain Dutch merchants resident in Denmark were able to persuade King Christian V that the negro slave-trade offered profitable opportunities for investment now that the Dutch West India Company could no longer enforce its monopoly of the commerce in Guinea. The Danes had already had some experience

of the coast, for under Christian IV a Danish Guinea Company had founded forts and factories there and notably Cabo Corse (Cape Coast Castle), Anamabo and Christiansborg, near Accra. But between 1658 and 1660 they were dispossessed of these ports by the Dutch, and since that date had held no footing in the slave-trade. Christian V's plan for acquiring increased commercial interests oversea was to found a chartered company after the Dutch model, and in 1671 a Danish West India Company was authorised to establish factories in Africa, to procure negroes for sale in the New World and to hold colonies in America where the negroes could be employed or stored for sale to the colonists of other powers. The close copying of the plans of the Dutch West India Company indicates clearly the source of inspiration of the scheme.

As the site of their first colony in the West Indies the Danes fixed upon the island of St. Thomas, one of the Virgin Islands, which had been occupied from time to time by various Englishmen who had tried planting, but now was only held by certain Dutch fugitives from St. Eustatius. The island had little water, but it possesses one of the finest harbours in the West Indies, and it was this that commended it to the promoters. Governor Stapleton of the Leeward Islands protested against the occupation of an island that had at one time been colonised by Englishmen, for he saw in the new colony merely a device to protect Dutch commerce under a neutral flag. However, he did not persist, and by 1672 the new settlement began with a cosmopolitan population of Danes and some French and English stragglers from neighbouring islands. The most important inhabitants, however, were the Dutch, for their experience and their old connections enabled them to bring to the

island trade that in time of war they could not carry on under their own flag.

The beginnings of Brandenburg enterprise in the West Indies were even more directly due to Dutch prompting than were those of the Danes. In 1672, when the United Provinces were attacked by the English and the French, the Great Elector, Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg, was their only ally and he was constant in their support, especially against Sweden and other allies of Louis XIV among the German princes. His main interests, of course, were in the Baltic, where he was beginning to build up a strong navy under the guidance of a Dutchman, Benjamin Raulé. This able and ambitious administrator maintained that Brandenburg could only expect to support and man her maritime forces if they were based upon a merchant marine engaged in oversea trade, and he therefore proposed to his master to offer a welcome to privateers of other nations who would attack French commerce, and to enter systematically into the profitable slave-trade with the West Indies.

The Company of the Indies was very little more successful in the trade with Africa than it was in the Antilles. In 1673 the French establishments on the coast were sold to certain merchants who formed the Company of the Senegal with private capital and free from governmental interference. In granting this concession Colbert thus turned away from the scheme of a centrally governed, State-aided company which had failed so disastrously to a free company in which personal initiative might make its way. The step was fully justified, for the new company was fortunate in finding among its employees a first-rate administrator and naval commander. Jean Baptiste Du Casse had



entered the merchant service young and received a hard training in the ships of the Company of the Indies in the Antilles and West Africa. From their service he passed into that of the Company of Senegal, and in 1677, when Goree was captured, he was placed in charge of all the new conquests. Though the Dutch had been driven out of their factories, they continued to trade with the natives along the coast from their fort of Arguin to the north of the Senegal. Du Casse therefore determined to expel them from this last foothold, and in 1678 he was successful in capturing it. This left the French as the only Europeans trading on the coast from the boundaries of Morocco right down to the Gambia and gave them every opportunity of obtaining a flourishing slave-trade.

To the task of building up this trade Du Casse set himself, and first of all to the permanent exclusion of Dutch interlopers. While he was absent in the Gambia, Dutch ships came into the waters round Cape Verde and attempted to obtain cargoes, but when the natives refused them they attempted to stir up insurrection against the French both there and along the Senegal. Similar attempts were made elsewhere along the coast, but Du Casse had a well-equipped squadron under his command and he resolutely withstood any Dutch interference. To the ex-Governor of Goree, Hopsack, who in 1679 appeared in the Senegal with the purpose of resuming trade and recovering possession of Arguin, Du Casse pointed out the provisions of the Treaty of Nymwegen. There it was agreed that all posts outside Europe that were taken within ten months of the signing of the treaty should remain in the hands of their captors. Goree was clearly already in French possession at the Peace and Arguin was taken within nineteen days. All

the country in the grant of the Senegal Company's charter was therefore now a French possession in full sovereignty and all Dutch trade was excluded. Hopsack strove to raise the natives against the French, but Du Casse prevented this danger, and in the end he had to bow to superior force and retire. The blow was very severe to Dutch hopes of repairing the losses of the war, but to the French their new possessions gave high promise for the future prosperity of the Antilles.

The posts along the Senegal had been the source of some of the best slaves transported by the Dutch to the Indies, and the Marquis de Seignelay, who had now succeeded his father Colbert as Colonial minister, resolved to carry on the trade in French hands. He had already planned to make Grenada in the Windward Islands into a second Curaçao, with slave-pens for the maturing of the negroes to be sold to the Spaniards, and warehouses for the storage of cargoes of French manufactures. But Grenada proved unsuitable owing to difficulties of navigation between it and the Spanish Main, and the prices of the French goods were so much higher than for those sold by the Dutch that the colonists would not look at them. The French merchants, too, were utterly unfamiliar with the conditions of colonial trade, while the Dutch, with half a century of experience, could suit the colonial taste to a nicety.

We have already mentioned that, as the war went on and the opportunities for Dutch trade were closed, merchants from Middelburg and Amsterdam like Raulé sought employment under foreign flags. This was also the case with lesser men, and it was all the easier because Dutch capitalists had never narrowly confined their investments to ventures under the flag of the States-General. Dutch shipmasters and factors, too, were

accustomed to serve wherever they could find profitable employment, and the French took to employing them in large numbers even during the war and to a greater extent after the Peace of Nymwegen. The stringent provisions of the Navigation Acts prevented Dutchmen finding employment in English ships, but there was little restriction in France. Much of the expansion of French trade at this period was built up with the help of Dutch employees, and much of the success that was achieved was due to their skill and experience. But the directing spirit was that of Du Casse, and having satisfactorily organised the trade in Africa he was transferred by the Company, with the King's consent, to Saint-Domingue to clear up the disorder there and put an end to the colonists' clandestine trade with the Dutch which still went on. With his success there we shall deal when we come to speak of French policy towards the *flibustiers*.

While Du Casse was organising the French trade, Raulé was trying to do the same for Brandenburg, but it was not until after the Peace of Nymwegen that he was able to do much. In 1679 the Elector was left by all his quondam allies to face France alone, and among his measures of defence he sent armed ships from Dutch ports with Brandenburg commissions to cruise against French commerce in the West Indies. When d'Estrées was sent out to reconnoitre the Spanish fortresses, as described earlier, he was ordered to seek out and destroy these Brandenburg cruisers which were thus striving to reopen for France's old enemies the privateering that the Treaty of Nymwegen had just closed to them. However, a few weeks later Louis and the Elector agreed to make peace, and in June 1679 a treaty was signed at St. Germain-en-Laye which was, of course, mainly concerned with matters in Europe. The Elector had pressed

for the inclusion of an article whereby France permitted Brandenburg subjects to carry negroes from Guinea and provisions, manufactures and other merchandise from his territories to the French Antilles. But Louis would not hear of accepting a proposal that was so contrary to his policy of restricting trade to his own subjects. The treaty therefore contained nothing more than a pledge of reciprocal freedom of trade. The cessation of hostilities in the West Indies was already provided for by a separate agreement in May 1679. However, despite his disappointment, the Elector authorised Raulé to go on with his African schemes, and at length, in 1682, a Brandenburg-Guinea Company was founded with results that we shall deal with in a later chapter.

But Friedrich Wilhelm was not only interested in Africa. He always desired to obtain a share of the riches of the Indies and this must necessarily bring him into the tangled questions of relations with Spain which have occupied so much of our attention. Before we can take them up again in connection with this new competitor, we must shew what had been happening meanwhile to the buccaneers.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE SUPPRESSION OF THE BUCCANEERS, 1672-1688

AS in the preceding years, so during the period of the Third Dutch War and after, the story of the buccaneers flows concurrently with the political events we have been describing, but now, after the great quarrel over Tortuga, it diverges into two separate streams, French and English. These we must trace in turn. After 1674, with occasional lapses, we may say that the consistent policy of the English government was to put down buccaneering and forbid the use of the English colonies as bases from which to rob the Spaniards. Under the first governorship of Sir Thomas Lynch in Jamaica (1671-1675) Charles II seemed to have come to the definite opinion that his most profitable policy was to cultivate Spanish goodwill by suppressing the buccaneers, but it was hard to secure obedience in the islands. Under Lynch's successors, Lord Vaughan and the Earl of Carlisle, Sir Henry Morgan was lieutenant-governor, and Spain found it impossible to believe in England's sincerity or good faith. Morgan, in fact, was playing a double game. Ostensibly he was active in carrying out the policy of suppression and inducing the buccaneers to take up planting, but surreptitiously he was encouraging their depredations from St. Domingue under the French flag and was taking a share in their profits. Lord Vaughan did his best to carry out Lynch's straight-

forward policy and protested strongly to the government at home against the impropriety of retaining Morgan in a position of authority, but he found great difficulty in carrying out his policy of suppression.

In 1677 six English buccaneering ships sacked Santa Marta and carried off many of the principal inhabitants to ransom, and Lord Vaughan could not bring them to reckoning. When he was succeeded by the Earl of Carlisle in 1678 while Morgan still retained his position as lieutenant-governor, there was a marked return to laxity and connivance in piracy. The English buccaneer, Captain Coxon, raided the ports of the Gulf of Honduras and carried off a large booty of indigo, cocoa and cochineal. He brought his booty into Port Royal, and in flagrant defiance of the orders of the government Morgan allowed him to refit there and carry his stolen goods away to Rhode Island to dispose of them through the godly New England Puritans.

Towards the end of 1679 six English buccaneering captains, again under the leadership of Coxon, joined with a French *flibustier* and sailed from a port on the north coast of Jamaica to attempt to repeat Morgan's famous exploit at Puerto Bello. They succeeded in entering the town in February 1680, but their booty was only small, for the inhabitants had taken refuge in the castle and it was impossible to dislodge them. But the buccaneers were flying for higher game. After they had divided their plunder at a remote island off the coast of Darien, they were joined by another notorious pirate captain named Sawkins, and in April 1680 they began their desperate enterprise. This was nothing less than a raid across the Isthmus of Darien into the undefended South Sea, whose trade was rapidly coming to fill an important place in the schemes of both the French and

the English governments. The prize was of immense value, and the depredations of the pirates could not fail to be harmful to the hopes of each of the competitors. Strong proclamations were issued for the seizure of the raiders before they could carry out their purpose. But it was too late. With the aid of the savage Indian enemies of the Spaniards Coxon and Sawkins succeeded in crossing the Isthmus through the unexplored forests and, seizing certain Spanish vessels, they began a cruise along the Pacific coast which lasted for nearly eighteen months and caused immense damage. Towns were burned and sacked all down the coasts of Peru and Chile, and the whole of the trade and shipping of the Indies was thrown into confusion, to the serious detriment of both French and English merchants in Europe. When the survivors of the buccaneers found their way back round Cape Horn to the West Indies in January 1682, every English governor was on the alert to seize them. They were compelled to scatter, and only a few were taken to meet the just penalty of their crimes.

The losses and evil effects of Coxon and Sawkins' raid were so serious in Jamaica that public opinion was at last roused to effective hostility against the freebooters, and even Morgan wrote home to beg for a force of small, fast frigates to hunt them down. A drastic Act was passed by the Jamaican Assembly making it felony for any British subject to serve under the flag of a foreign prince. Many English rovers still continued to ply their trade under French commissions, but that the Acts were by no means a dead letter is proved by the conviction and hanging for piracy in Jamaica of more than one privateer who had attacked Dutch shipping after the proclamation of peace.

But the opportunities for plunder that still lay open

while the French authorities in Tortuga offered a convenient harbour with no questions asked were too attractive for many of the old buccaneers, and they preferred to run the chance of capture and a pirate's death in chains rather than take to planting or the hard trade of the logwood-cutter.

France still dreamed of making the buccaneers an instrument for the furtherance of her Caribbean policy, and she did not abandon her complacency towards them until it was clear beyond mistake that the *flibustiers* were a hindrance to the accomplishment of her Spanish designs. This did not appear until later, and the period from 1678 to 1685 was the great age of the buccaneers under French patronage, and saw many striking events. In a memoir addressed to the authorities in France in 1677 the Seigneur de Pouançay, Governor of Saint-Domingue, who had carried on d'Ogeron's policy of suppressing the *boucaniers*, described the state of the *flibustiers* based upon the colony, who were treated with much more complaisance. 'There are still here,' he wrote, 'more than a thousand of the men they call *flibustiers*, who are those who are usually engaged in privateering and in raids on the Spaniards, and are brave fellows, well armed. It is impossible to tell the number precisely, but according to my experience I believe that there are about that number, it being known to me that a fleet of 600 of them has left here whose commander is the Marquis de Maintenon, and besides that there are two or three separate corsairs in addition to those who did not embark. Their manner of life is very singular. They only raid the Spaniards and cruise to get something with which to come and eat and drink at Petit-Goave or in Tortuga. They never leave so long as they have wine to drink, or money, or merchandise or credit



to procure them. When they depart they make choice of the captain or vessel which suits them best without binding themselves to anyone. They only put on board ordinarily victuals enough for eight days. They leave their ships anywhere they please. They give very little obedience to anyone in all that concerns the working of the ship, for they all esteem themselves to be leaders, but in the carrying out of an enterprise against the enemy they obey well. Each man has his own arms, his powder and his bullets. Their vessels are usually not very powerful and they are ill-equipped. Usually they have only those they capture from the Spaniards.'

In 1678 the leader of the French *flibustiers* in Tortuga and Hispaniola was the Sieur de Grammont, an adventurer of good family and extraordinary daring, who had considerable organising ability. At the head of a large force of Frenchmen he attacked the Spanish settlements around the lake of Maracaibo,<sup>1</sup> and for six months established a pirate stronghold there from which he could raid the other towns along the Main. Other *flibustiers*, under the command of the Marquis de Maintenon, who based themselves upon Tortuga, were also ravaging along the coast of Venezuela about the same time, and in an attack on the pearl fisheries at Margarita they practically destroyed them so that they never recovered. The Marquis de Maintenon also raided the small and poor Spanish settlements that were then the only habitations of white men in Trinidad, but his gains were small as compared with those of de Grammont.

Down to the time of Governor de Pouançay the French government regarded the *flibustiers* as a useful instrument to bring pressure to bear upon the Spaniards, but their last and greatest exploit, which took place

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 312.

under his governorship, gave rise to so much difficulty that when his successor, the Sieur Tarin de Cussy, reached Saint-Domingue in 1684, he carried out stringent orders for their suppression. In 1682 two Dutch corsairs, Nicholas van Horn and Laurens de Graff, notorious ruffians who had been plundering English and Dutch slave-ships off the Guinea coast, were permitted by de Pouançay in return for a share in the spoil to divide in the harbour of Petit-Goave the plunder they had captured in a Spanish vessel that was carrying 120,000 pieces of eight from Havana to pay the garrisons of Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico. Then with their profits Van Horn and de Graff fitted out ships commanded by themselves and three other Dutchmen and one Englishman for a bolder enterprise than had ever yet been attempted by the buccaneers. This was nothing less than a raid against the unconquered port of Mexico, San Juan de Ulua, or, as it was now called, Vera Cruz, where Hawkins had suffered so grievously more than a hundred years before.

To the number of about 1000 the *fibustiers* made their rendezvous near Cape Catoche in Yucatan. The leaders of the party were the Dutchmen, Van Horn and de Graff, and of the captains of other ships three were Dutch, two English and one French. But the ablest leader in the expedition was probably Van Horn's lieutenant, the French adventurer and corsair, de Grammont. After various adventures and much wrangling the buccaneers sailed in company for their objective in May 1683. When they arrived off Vera Cruz late at night, the Spaniards were expecting the appearance of certain ships from Venezuela to meet the *flota* from Spain which was then nearly due. Knowing this from their spies on shore, the buccaneers

disguised themselves under Spanish colours and found their way into the roadstead between the fort of San Juan de Ulua and the town without resistance. They attacked at once, and before daybreak the whole town had passed into their hands. For four days they delivered it over to sack with unspeakable barbarities. The governor, Don Luis de Cordova, was discovered by an English pirate hiding in a stable and held to ransom for 70,000 pieces of eight, while under a threat of destroying the whole city the buccaneers compelled the country round to pay a very large contribution. Meanwhile the *flota* of fourteen ships from Cadiz had been lying outside the harbour within sight of the city, but their captains neither dared to land nor attack the empty vessels of the buccaneers. To such a depth had Spanish valour sunk, even though the Viceroy of New Spain was advancing from Mexico with an army. But the rovers were allowed to sail away unscathed to divide their spoil at a cay near by. It was enormous, and was said to amount to 3,000,000 reals; for besides money, gold, silver and jewels that were sufficient to give 1000 shares of 800 pieces of eight each, the buccaneers carried off 1500 or 1800 slaves for sale to the planters of Saint-Domingue. The leaders quarrelled and fought over the division of the spoil and Van Horn died of his wounds, leaving de Graff and de Grammont to return in triumph to Petit-Goave. Nothing could illustrate more vividly the abasement of the Spanish power than the fact that the freebooters had not lost more than three or four men, and that in the face of a numerous force fresh from Spain the chief port of the greatest vice-royalty in the Indies had been plundered with impunity.

The Spanish authorities in the Indies fully realised that though some Englishmen were included among

the buccaneers, it was impossible to blame the Governor of Jamaica as in earlier raids of the kind. The encouragement to the buccaneers had come from the French of Saint-Domingue, and Spain regarded the raid as another evidence to be added to d'Estrées' proceedings to prove the insolence of the King of France and his lack of scruple in pursuing his ends. With the results in Europe we must deal in our next chapter, but we may note that in the Indies for the first time the Spanish governors sought the aid of the Jamaican government in their defence. At the request of the Spanish ambassador in London, Charles II sent out orders to Sir Thomas Lynch to assist the Spanish authorities to make a full enquiry into the circumstances of the raid, and this marked the beginning of more friendly relations than had prevailed since the capture of Jamaica in 1655.

At the arrival of de Cussy in Saint-Domingue in 1684 he calculated that the *flibustiers* had seventeen ships mounting 328 guns and manned by 1875 men. In a colony of under 7000 persons such a force was very formidable, and the governor found the greatest difficulty in carrying out his orders to suppress buccaneering. De Grammont and the other *flibustiers* were uncontrollable, and they would rather break out into open revolt than abandon their piracies. A year after de Cussy had begun his work of clearing up the scandalous anarchy that prevailed throughout the colony, de Grammont and Laurens de Graff got together a force of some 1100 men at Isle la Vache and descended upon Yucatan, despite all the governor's attempts to prevent the enterprise. They were driven off at Merida, but Campeche fell into their hands, and for six weeks the city remained in the Frenchmen's power while they

raided and devastated the country round. Before they abandoned their prize, Campeche was reduced to ashes and the fortress that commanded it blown up.

De Cussy's task of bringing Saint-Domingue to order was one of extraordinary difficulty, for he was dependent wholly upon his own resources and had no regular garrison to assist him. The local governors were deeply implicated in the piracies and were accustomed, especially at Petit-Goave in the extreme west of Hispaniola, to add to their income by issuing commissions to the *flibustiers* for service, nominally against the Spanish colonists in the east of the island with whom there was incessant war, but really for some protection in their raids against anyone who was worth robbing. William Dampier, the celebrated circumnavigator who was himself between 1676 and 1685 alternately buccaneer and logwood-cutter in Campeachy, tells us that the planters in Jamaica were constantly the prey of *flibustiers*, with these pretended commissions, and the evil was so serious as to demand protests from the English government to the King of France, to his great annoyance at a time when he was endeavouring to bring England to subservience to his anti-Spanish policy. However, de Cussy did his best and he had some success. In 1689 he was able to report to one of his correspondents in France: 'I have destroyed filibustering because the Court wished it, and I have only attained that end with a great deal of trouble. I wish now that I had not succeeded so well, for otherwise there would have been ten or twelve good ships on this coast with a large number of brave men manning them.' He was thinking of their employment against the English and the Dutch in the new war that had just broken out.

Du Casse, who succeeded de Cussy, also bitterly

regretted the suppression of the *flibustiers* in 1691, as we can read in his despatches to the King, and this evidence proves that by the end of our period the French had come into line with the English in giving up the lawless and unmanageable policy of which they had so long availed themselves. The effective means for the suppression was to deprive the *flibustiers* of their leaders. In 1684, after the trouble caused by the sack of Vera Cruz and Campeche, de Cussy was authorised by the Marquis de Seignelay to buy de Grammont and Laurens de Graff off into the royal service and employ them for the suppression of their quondam allies. De Grammont, before he took up his new dignity as 'Major' or Lieutenant-Governor of Saint-Domingue, sailed off on his last raid and was lost at sea, but Laurens de Graff lived to do good service in the English wars and to become one of the founders of a new colony in Louisiana before his death in 1704.

When Sir Thomas Lynch returned to Jamaica in 1682 to serve as governor for the second time, he found a new temper prevailing in the colony. His efforts to suppress piracy and encourage planting met with general approval, and ready assistance was forthcoming from the planters in place of the sullen hostility and secret fostering of the buccaneers which had impeded him during his first governorship. The planters had come at last to realise that to harbour ruffians and afford them every opportunity of squandering their plunder in riot and debauchery made Port Royal such a scene of licence and disorder that it drove away legitimate trade and prevented the investment of capital in serious enterprise.

As the opportunities of profitable attacks upon the Spaniards under a pretext of reprisals diminished, the

buccaneers turned to indiscriminate piracy and robbed the ships of all nations without scruple. As English ships were now more numerous in the Caribbean than any but the Dutch, they suffered heavily and the rates of insurance were very high, which in turn raised the cost of living in Jamaica. Most of the French ships in West Indian waters still belonged to the *flibustiers* of Domingue and Tortuga and they, of course, went unscathed. But the colonists of Jamaica suffered grievously at the hands of the *flibustiers* especially from Petit-Goave, which was the last port of Hispaniola to be brought into order. Again new competitors were joining in the game. From the creeks of Cuba and Puerto Rico creoles, negroes and half-castes stole out in shallow-draught, fast-sailing *periaguas* to attack unsuspecting merchant vessels sailing past their coasts. In the shallow waters off Honduras and Nicaragua they often made short work even of privateers when they were encountered single-handed. There were 'Biscayners', too, privateers from the ports of Guipuzcoa who were employed by the King of Spain to suppress buccaneering. They were none too scrupulous in distinguishing between peaceful English traders going about their lawful occasions and the pirates for whom they were in search, and very often the Biscayners themselves joined the pirates and robbed every trading-ship they came across whether English, Spanish, French or Dutch.

Piracy was, in fact, becoming an unbearable plague to the honest enterprise of every nation, and all the West Indies longed for its suppression. The French government dallied longest, as we have shewn, but by the time of Sir Thomas Lynch's death in 1684 the hand of every responsible Englishman in Jamaica was turned against

the buccaneers. The other English colonies under the sagacious lead of Stapleton and Codrington had long ceased to support the rovers. This was unfortunately not the case in New England and the other mainland colonies. The King's orders for a strict enforcement of the laws against the harbouring and fitting-out of pirates were flagrantly disregarded in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and Carolina was at this period practically a pirate community without disguise.

In the port of Boston the King's proclamations against buccaneering were torn down with derision, and long after the rover captains could hope to get assistance in fitting out their ships or disposing of their plunder in an English port or with any reputable firm, they might rely upon a warm welcome in Massachusetts and plenty of financial help if they would only return a sufficiently high rate of profit upon it. The pious elders of Salem and Rhode Island did not like sea robberies to take place in northern waters, for that raised insurance rates, but in the West Indies they could see no reason why the traditional warfare should not go on as before, and they were not too inquisitive as to whether a captain who came to trade with them had won his cargoes by buccaneering or piracy; the only question was one of price. Thus the last assistance to the rovers came from the same groups of merchants as those who were at the same period inventing and elaborating a smuggling system to break through the restrictive provisions of the Navigation Acts, and so it merges directly into the quarrels of the eighteenth century and irresistibly calls to mind the scandals of a more recent day.

James II provided the Lieutenant-Governor of Jamaica with a small number of fast-sailing frigates, and these were set to cruising off the south coast of Cuba



and Hispaniola and elsewhere on the track of any rovers who might appear. In August 1687 the King commissioned Sir Robert Holmes to proceed with a powerful squadron across the Atlantic and make a thorough clearance of the American seas. Orders were issued to all the colonial governors to give him their support, and in a few months he did a great deal to suppress the evil. He found that the fostering of pirates in the West Indian islands belonging to England had nearly ceased, but that the Carolinas and the coral cays of the Bahamas were the bases from which they carried on their depredations. So long as Holmes' squadron was cruising along the coast, piracy was at an end and the rovers fled to other waters, to raid into the South Sea or to prey on the East Indian trade off the coast of Madagascar, but usually to return with their booty to one of the New England ports where it was impossible to persuade any jury to convict them.

When Christopher Monck, second Duke of Albemarle, went out to Jamaica as governor in 1687, he saw fit to restore Sir Henry Morgan to the place of lieutenant-governor and returned to a policy of leniency towards buccaneering. This threw the trade of the island into chaos, but the régime did not last long, for Albemarle and Morgan both died in 1688. Their successors were honest and capable officials who had learned their business under Sir Thomas Lynch and were prepared to carry out his consistent and well-aimed policy for advancing Jamaica along the paths of honest industry. Henceforward, though some governors were laxer than others, there was no more deviation from the settled policy of suppression.

On the French side the Court gradually decided to abide by that policy consistently, the final influence

in that direction being exerted by Du Casse, who knew what harm the *flibustiers* caused to the steady progress of the colony. But this decision was also dictated by considerations of the general situation, and to explain them we must return to the point where we left it after the conclusion of the treaties of Nymwegen.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE END OF AN ERA, 1678-1688

THE ten years between the Peace of Nymwegen and the English Revolution of 1688 were in a very real sense the end of an epoch of West Indian and in fact colonial history. They saw the abandonment under the lessons of experience of the policies and maxims of the body of accepted custom that we call International Law, which had been held good ever since the days of the great discoveries. Their abandonment was recorded in definite treaty engagements, not on any theoretical grounds, but as a remedy for evils that the course of events had brought home to all. Spain, the first-comer in the colonial sphere, was intimately concerned in each of the three principal doctrines, and in two of them she was the last to accede to the ideas of the other colonial powers. She had maintained that the Caribbean and the other waters of the Indies were *mare clausum*, and that access to them and trade there were contrary to international law (to use the modern idea) save under the conditions she imposed. In practice the other powers had proved this doctrine untenable before the Peace of Westphalia (1648), but it was not until after 1660 that we can say that the 'freedom of the seas' was fully accepted by Spain.

Spain was also the last to accept the second doctrine that effective occupation alone gives valid title to colonial lands and that the rights acquired by prior

discovery are only effective if they are followed up by settlement. The opposite view was especially maintained by England, but supported also by the Dutch and France in turn. As we have shewn, Spain for the first time formally abandoned her pretension to exclusive rights in the Indies by virtue of her prior discovery, in the American treaty of 1670. Thereafter she recognised the valid titles of the other powers to their settlements, especially, for example, the English in Barbados and Virginia and the Dutch in Curaçao, and based her claims to exclude the logwood-cutters from the coast of Campeachy or the Jamaica settlers from the Mosquito Coast on the ground that those regions were in her effective occupation. In the negotiations of the period after 1678 she depended for the first time wholly on these arguments in place of her previous contentions of prior discovery.

In regard to the third doctrine Spain was the advocate of a change which the other powers were unwilling to accept until they had abandoned their use and support of the buccaneers. Ever since the days of the first discoveries in the fifteenth century it was an accepted maxim that 'There is no peace beyond the line'; that is to say, hostile acts in regions beyond the limits of Europe should not be regarded as a breach of the European peace. In the first half of the seventeenth century violent fighting was going on between the Dutch and English in the East Indies while their two governments were in close alliance at home. The doctrine affected all colonial relations, but especially those of the other nations with Spain and Portugal. It was clear that until the same state of peace or war governed relations both in Europe and other parts of the world, the colonies were not included in the full comity of nations. They were still in the realm of

savagery without accepted law, and hence unable to maintain settled relations one with another with the aim of mutual prosperity. This was the last of the three doctrines to reach its modern form by solemn agreement among all the powers in turn; but before 1688 each had included in some treaty a provision recording that the same relations of peace or war were to prevail both in Europe and the regions outside.

In connection with the Third Dutch War we have mentioned that Spain was allied with the States-General in opposition to England and France. The treaty of alliance which was signed at The Hague in August 1673 was the first in which the new provision guaranteeing peace between the two powers covered their dominions both in Europe and the lands beyond the sea was included. It provided for the mutual guaranty of lands, commercial rights and navigation both within and without Europe; the restoration to either ally of the possessions it had held before the war, and open war against France while Spain agreed to break with England if she would not accept the peace conditions that Spain was authorised to offer on behalf of the United Provinces. It will be remembered that peace was concluded between England and the Dutch by the Treaty of Westminster in February 1674; and though the plenipotentiaries of the States-General endeavoured to exclude the East Indies from the peace, they were ultimately compelled to agree to the subsidiary marine Treaty of London (December 1674), in which it was provided that the governors of the English East India and African companies, the directors of the Dutch East and West India companies, and the chief officers of the Dutch and English colonies should enforce the treaty of peace throughout the world.

Thus Spain and the United Provinces, and England and the United Provinces in separate instruments had agreed to the principle that peace treaties should be world-wide in their application. The next step was to extend this principle to the relations between England and Spain, but this was not accomplished until after the general Peace of Nymwegen.

After the great success that attended Louis XIV's arms in the Dutch war, it seemed as though a change for the worse came over his policy. The caution and finesse that French statesmanship had learned under Richelieu and Mazarin gave way to imperiousness and a disdain of tact that manifested itself even in our limited Caribbean field. D'Estrées' high-handed proceedings in the Spanish ports were evidence that the most elementary rights of international intercourse would be disregarded when Louis chose to order it, and he seemed to prefer rather to seek his ends by force than by negotiation.

To checkmate his designs English interests pointed to an alliance with Spain and the Dutch in order to prevent them falling into complete subservience to France. This idea was popular among the Country party who were now in the ascendant, and Sunderland, Charles's chief minister, was ready to begin negotiations with Spain although she had recently declined to consider Godolphin's proposals that the new *asiento* which was just being made should oblige the contractors to buy their negroes from Jamaica or Barbados. In May 1680 a treaty of defensive alliance was concluded at Windsor by which it was agreed that if either the King of Great Britain or the King of Spain were troubled by another power either in his dominions or in his rights of navigation or commerce in any part of the world, the

other party would 'make every effort to cause such hostility or molestation to cease, and to cause the damages and injuries done to either of the allies to be made good'. If this could not be accomplished within four months, and if the ally thus attacked 'outside Europe, in whatever part of the world' were forced 'to use his arms against the disturber within Europe', then the other ally would aid him in making 'open war against the disturber or aggressor, in just the same manner as if the invasion or molestation had happened within the limits of Europe'.

England thus joined Spain and the United Provinces in determining to destroy the old convention that war beyond the line differed from war in Europe, the idea that her own statesmen had supported since the days of Elizabeth. The West Indies were to be brought within the circle of international comity, and a breach of that comity was to be held as involving the same consequences as if the hostile actions had taken place in Europe. The essential article of the treaty was closely modelled upon the agreement of 1673, and it marks a definite step towards the construction of a new system of international relationships.

Meanwhile Brandenburg had begun to take a share in the game of harrying Spanish commerce in the West Indies, and in 1680 a squadron of five ships was sent to the Caribbean in search of prizes. They were not very successful, and, as they had no base of their own in those waters, they had to dispose of their captures either in Jamaica or in one of the French harbours. Louis XIV. was anxious to secure the alliance of the Elector for the furtherance of his schemes in Germany, and he therefore sent orders to his governors in the West Indies to afford every facility for the Brandenburgers. In 1681—

1682 he concluded treaties with Friedrich Wilhelm at Cöln-on-the-Spree by which he promised to further the designs of the Elector against the ports on the Spanish Main in order to secure payment of various sums that were claimed as compensation for damages suffered in Europe. Louis also promised to mediate with the King of Denmark for the grant of privileges in his West Indian possessions which would afford a base of operations for the Brandenburgers in the Caribbean. The treaties were not of lasting importance, but they are of interest as the first instance of a practice that became frequent in later centuries, that of using warlike operations in American waters as a means of enforcing payment of debts incurred elsewhere.

When the Great Elector thus entered into alliance with Louis XIV to compel Spain by force to satisfy his demands, it seemed as though the settlement of Nymwegen was to be torn up and the world plunged again into a general war. Although the activities of the Brandenburgers and the Danes did not have an influence of first-rate importance on the main current of affairs, we may pause a moment to note what was happening with them while the principal contestants were struggling for position in the coming conflict.

An expedition was sent by the Elector to Guinea in 1680 under a Dutch captain to take negroes and sell them to the *asientistas* in Lisbon and Cadiz, and after the conclusion of the Treaty of Cöln-on-the-Spree a fort, Grosse Friedrichsburg, was built upon the Gold Coast and slave-dealing commenced with Dutch factors. When the slaves had been carried across the Atlantic, it was necessary to have a base in the West Indies at which to mature them and prepare them for sale. The Brandenburgers tried to establish themselves



in Tobago, which after its devastation during the war had not yet been re-established. But the States-General successfully protested that that island was their property, and the Brandenburg cargoes had to be taken to St. Eustatius. There they met with so many difficulties from their Dutch competitors that Friedrich Wilhelm entered into negotiations with the Danes for the right to use St. Thomas as an emporium.

Though the island had only a population of some 200 Danes at its highest, its harbour was thronged with desperadoes of all nations, of whom British subjects were in the majority. Adolf Esmit, the governor in 1682, had himself been a buccaneer, and he made St. Thomas a regular Alsatia for the harbouring of runaway criminals and absconding debtors. He made a business of fitting out buccaneering vessels with arms and provisions, and for a percentage of their booty he permitted the pirates to dispose of their prizes with no awkward questions asked as to the nationality of their original owners. There was never any colony in the real sense in St. Thomas, and Admiral Benbow some years later fairly described the situation when he said that nothing could be done to bring the island to order without permanently occupying it, for when they were threatened with an attack, the Danes put all their possessions on their backs and scampered away into the hills, where it was not worth while to pursue them.

The scandal became so serious and such a danger to the trade of the Leeward Islands that in 1683 England had to bring pressure to bear on the King of Denmark to remove it. He was compelled to send out a new governor, and in 1684 Sir William Stapleton assisted him to get possession of the island and discipline its inhabitants to more seemly courses. This was important,

for it closed one of the pirates' last bolt-holes, but in view of the continued laxity in Saint-Domingue, it only meant that the buccaneers moved on to other harbours in French territory and sought succour there.

By 1684 the Brandenburg-African Company under Raulé's management was very active in trying to sell its negroes to the Spanish colonists, but the King of Spain firmly refused to allow direct importation into his ports in the Indies, and insisted that only indirect dealing at some West Indian emporium would be allowed. Friedrich Wilhelm therefore tried to persuade Spain to cede Trinidad to him in discharge of her outstanding debt, but his offers were haughtily refused, and he turned instead to France and offered to purchase St. Vincent or Saint-Croix, but again without success. Denmark was, however, more complaisant, and finally in 1685 a treaty was negotiated by Raulé at Copenhagen by which Brandenburg was allowed to rent land in St. Thomas sufficient to establish a *depôt* where negroes could be landed and acclimatised preparatory to sale. Danish protection was promised to Brandenburg ships and merchants, and they were permitted to trade with the buccaneers or the Spaniards on payment of certain stated duties to the Danish Company. The sovereignty of the island of St. Thomas, however, was wholly retained by Denmark.

This treaty gave rise to many difficulties and disputes between the two powers, for the more energetic Brandenburgers and their Dutch employees were more successful traders than the Danes, and the latter made less profit out of the concession than they had hoped. Changes in the international situation, too, seriously weakened the alliance, and when our period closes things looked like coming to an open breach. Neither Denmark

nor Brandenburg succeeded in becoming a serious factor in West Indian affairs, but the establishment of a new and laxly governed port in St. Thomas facilitated piracy and was a nuisance to every properly settled colony in the West Indies. During the great West Indian naval campaigns of the eighteenth century the existence of a neutral harbour in the heart of the Leeward Islands was regarded by the naval commanders on either side with very mixed feelings, though their privateers looked upon St. Thomas as a useful haven of refuge.

The unbearable insolence with which France had treated Spain ever since the Treaty of Nymwegen was not confined to the West Indies. It was as marked in Europe where, it naturally attracted more attention, and it was mainly because of Louis' imperious actions in the Spanish Netherlands that the unfortunate Spaniards were at last goaded to declare war in December 1683. But the outrage at Vera Cruz was undoubtedly a contributory cause, and when Spain called upon England and the States-General to come to her support according to the treaties of mutual defence, it was in the West Indies that she expected assistance.

But though Charles II might have promised three years before, the fickleness of his policy was notorious. As soon as Louis realised the danger of an effective Anglo-Spanish combination to which his high-handed measures were then leading, he had to exert all his influence at the English Court to compel Charles II to abandon the Spaniards and return to his old subservient complaisance towards France. The Dutch could not be persuaded by Spain to give effective help either against the French armies who were devastating the Netherlands or in the colonies. William of Orange tried to make

both England and the States-General take up arms, but without avail, for Charles was for the last time freed by the downfall of the Whigs to do as he liked, and the States-General would not realise that the interests of Spain against France were their own. The Emperor could not assist because of the terrible Turkish invasion of Hungary, which carried the Sultan's armies to the very gates of Vienna. Spain was left to face her imperious enemy alone and was abjectly compelled to grant almost everything that was demanded of her in July 1684, only six months after she had made her last gesture of defiance by declaring war (December 1683).

France's designs for carrying on the war were much concerned with the Indies. Under the inspiration of the celebrated explorer La Salle, the Marquis de Seignelay, who was now Louis' adviser in colonial matters, planned the seizure of all the territories round the Gulf of Mexico with a force including only a small number of troops and ships from France, but mainly to be composed of *flibustiers* and creoles from Saint-Domingue. This shews that as late as 1684 the use of buccaneers was still a possible factor in French policy, but the design did not mature, for before it could be put into operation, peace was signed.

The success of the French armies in the Netherlands convinced the Dutch of the imperative necessity of getting Spain to submit, and finally, in August 1684, by their mediation she was brought to agree to the Truce of Ratisbon, which provided for a cessation of hostilities for twenty years. The truce is of great interest in our study, for on the one hand it includes the recognition by France of the principles which had been accepted by the Dutch at The Hague in 1673 and by England at Windsor in 1680. On the other, it seems to mark an

end of the old Spain that had been 'the Colossus that bestrode the world'. Henceforth till after the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 the Spanish dominions were merely a prey for other powers to struggle over, and until the Frenchmen who came in with Philip V infused new energy into the inert mass, there was no longer a Spanish policy. After Ratisbon the Spain of Philip II, the proud, exclusive power whose actions in part have concerned us all through these pages, was dead. The Spain of the eighteenth century was also of vital importance in the colonial field, but she was recognisably different.

Before discussing the terms of the truce that affect the West Indies we may ask why it was that Louis at the height of victory, with all his enemies entangled in difficulties so that they could hardly withstand him, was yet willing to grant peace to the weakest of them all without utterly humiliating her. There can be no doubt that the principal governing factors were to be found in Europe, but we can be certain that the Spanish Indies and the colonists filled a large part in Louis' calculations. Charles II, the last feeble descendant of Philip II in the male line, though he had lived far beyond what was expected at the date of the Partition treaty of 1668 when he was a frail and sickly child, would die without direct heirs. What was to be the fate of his vast dominions including by far the richest and most extensive colonial empire in the world? There lay the essential question governing West Indian policy.

Louis was determined in right of his Spanish wife, the elder daughter of Philip IV, to be their heir, despite the solemn renunciation in his marriage contract of 1660. From d'Estrées and other informants he had now a full description of their defencelessness and

estimates of colonial opinion. Two courses lay open. Should the Spanish colonists be forced to acknowledge Louis' might by ruthless attacks against their ports and trade, or on the other hand should they be attracted by promises of French help and protection against their Protestant enemies? In his domineering policy since Nymwegen we seem to see a leaning towards the former alternative, in his orders for the suppression of the *flibustiers* after 1683 and the terms of the Truce of Ratisbon the adoption of the latter. But the choice was infinitely complicated and difficult, and it was not until some years after the close of our period that it was consistently followed, and Louis' grandson, the Duke of Anjou, supported on the throne of Spain as Philip V with all the protection and help in organisation that France could give. To accomplish that winning of the 'Spanish Succession' took two great wars and brought France to exhaustion without giving all she had aimed at. But in the Indies her success though partial was very great and it had a good deal of influence upon subsequent history. That, however, lies beyond the limits of our present study and we can only point to the Truce of Ratisbon as the first definite step towards the new pro-Spanish policy.

The provisions of the new treaty were very simple and ostensibly directed towards restoring the condition of things as they stood at the Peace of Nymwegen. But the point of principle affecting the Indies comes out in the first article, whereby the King of France for the first time abandoned the old principle of 'No peace beyond the line' and agreed that:

'1. All hostilities shall cease on both sides, both by land and by sea and other waters, in all [the] kingdoms, countries, provinces, territories and

dominions [of the high contracting parties] *within Europe and without, both on this side of and beyond the Line*, and everything shall be restored, on both sides, to the state established by the peace of Nymwegen. . . .

'5. His Most Christian Majesty shall also be obliged, after the delivery of the ratification by Spain, to recall his forces from the dominions of his Royal Catholic Majesty, wherever situated. . . .

'10. His Sacred Imperial Majesty, both for himself and in the name of the Catholic King, as also his Most Christian Majesty, agree, that the Emperor, the entire Holy Roman Empire, the King of Great Britain, the States of the United Provinces, and finally all kings, princes, republics, and states, who may wish to enter into this engagement, shall promise both parties to undertake the guaranty of these treaties [*i.e.* of Breda and Nymwegen] for restoring and securing the good faith and universal tranquillity of the Christian world.'

This guaranty in the end amounted to nothing, but it is interesting as summarising the adhesion of all the great powers to the new principle that peace in Europe should govern peace beyond the line.

The Truce of Ratisbon brought to an end the extraordinary warfare that had been sporadic in the West Indies for more than a century. From the raids of Jacques de Sores in the sixteenth to the daring exploits of Morgan and de Grammont in the seventeenth century the Caribbean had been the scene of warfare, ungoverned by any of the conventions that in the Old World had gradually coalesced into the rudiments of international law. The maritime powers had for three

generations employed against the Spanish Indies methods of attack that they had long abandoned in Europe as destructive of all possibility of an ordered international comity. As the nations grew in strength so they learned that the indiscriminate destructiveness of private war was fatal to the pursuit of national aims, and the same lesson was driven home in the West Indies. When those aims came to include the desire for steady and reliable colonial and commercial advancement, responsible statesmen began to realise that it could not be achieved in a region convulsed by piracy and anarchy, and so the Caribbean was at last brought within the circle of customary international relations. This did not mean a cessation of war, for the West Indies saw as fierce struggles in the eighteenth as in the seventeenth century. But they were fought by disciplined forces under the direction of responsible leaders and not for merely private profit at the expense of individuals, and this gives a new direction to the history.

So, when the Revolution of 1688 brought Great Britain and Holland together under the same leadership, international rivalry in the West Indies entered upon a new phase. The age of the buccaneers was over, and with the opening of the intense struggle between William of Orange and Louis XIV that of the great admirals began. The line of Caribbean corsairs that stretched from the private captains of Henry II's time through Drake and Hawkins, Cumberland and Piet Hein, to their degraded imitators of the days of Michel L'Ollonois, Morgan and de Grammont, gave place to a new dynasty of professional seamen of at least equal skill but with infinitely finer discipline and loyalty. Even their names—Du Casse and Benbow, Vernon, de Grasse, Suffren, Rodney and Nelson—serve to recall



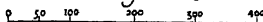
some of the essential qualities that mark the difference between the centuries. In the earlier era the West Indies were generally little more than a remote back-water where one's enemy might be annoyed by individual effort; in the later the Caribbean is one of the essential theatres of a maritime war that lasted with comparatively brief intervals from the days of William III to those of Nelson. The natural dividing point is 1688, and there our present study may appropriately end.



# THE WEST INDIES

about 1680

Scale of Miles

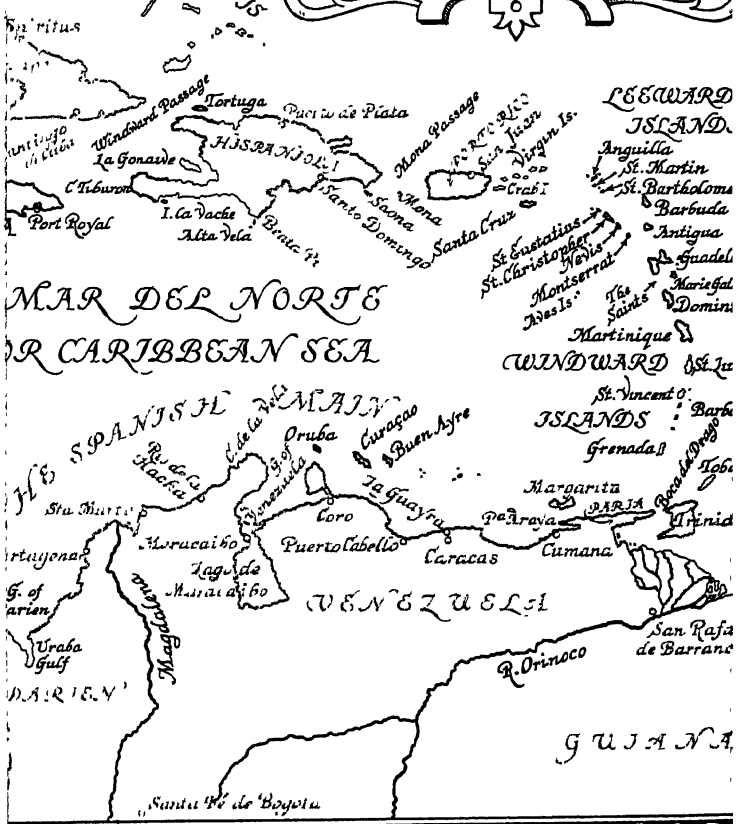


Coasts and places in effective  
Spanish occupation in Red

Islands and places in the effective  
occupation of other nations in Black

Coasts and Islands not occupied by  
Europeans are marked faintly

ISLANDS OR BAHAMAS





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